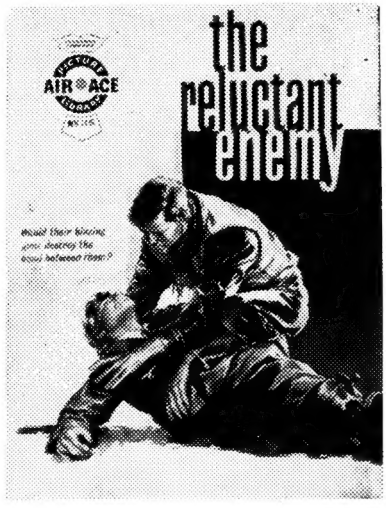
A FLEETWAY LIBRARY
PICTURE
AIR ACE
LIBRARY
No 117
1/-
HE SENT OUT HIS FRIENDS TO FIGHT... AND DIE.
Cruel Harvest

TWO VIVID STORIES OF WAR-IN-THE-AIR

Would their blazing guns destroy the bond between them?



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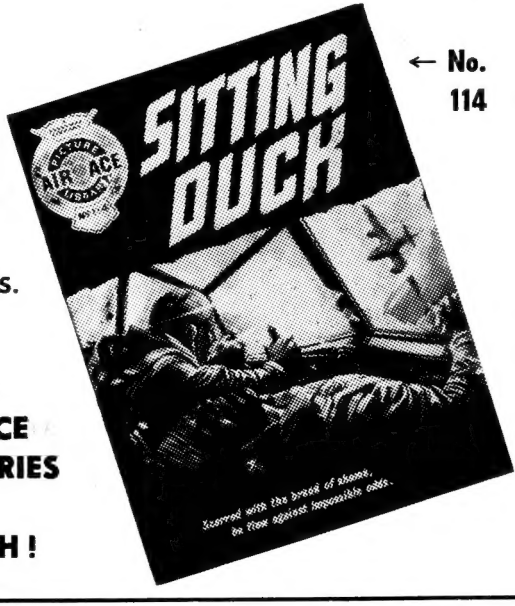

Scarred with the brand of shame, he flew against impossible odds.

THERE ARE FOUR AIR ACE PICTURE LIBRARIES ON SALE EVERY MONTH!

Cruel Harvest

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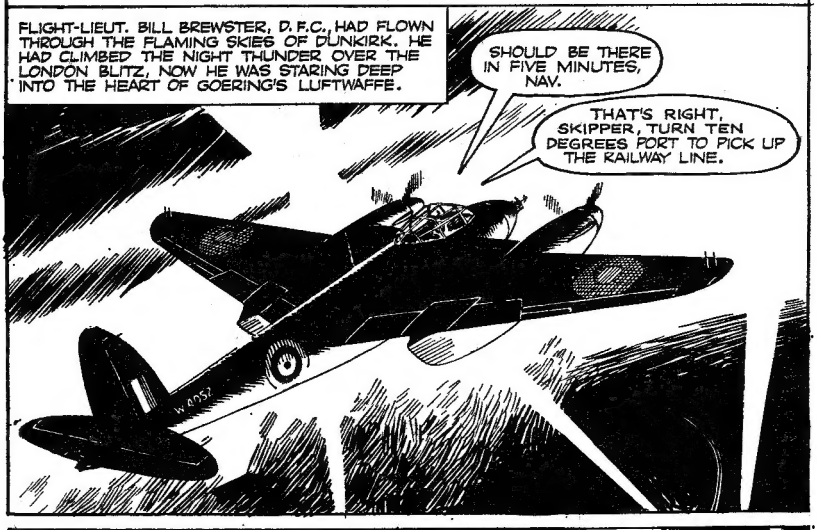
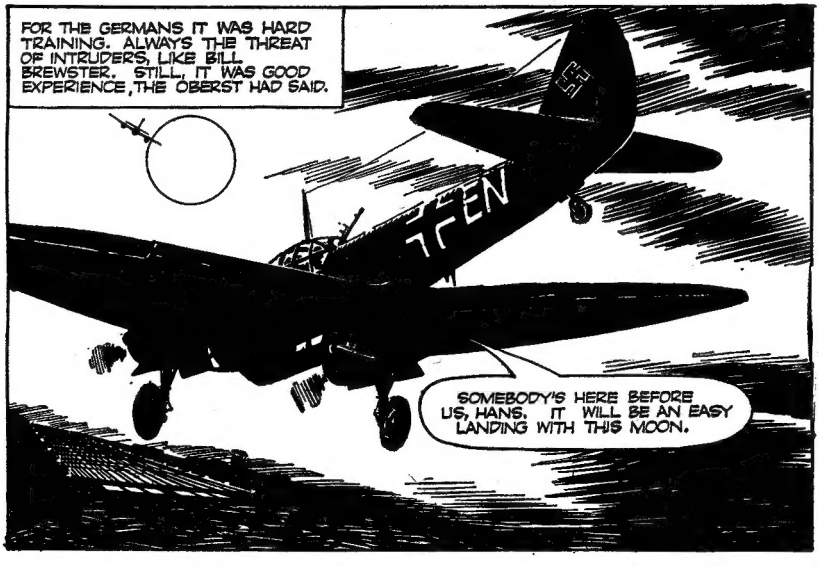
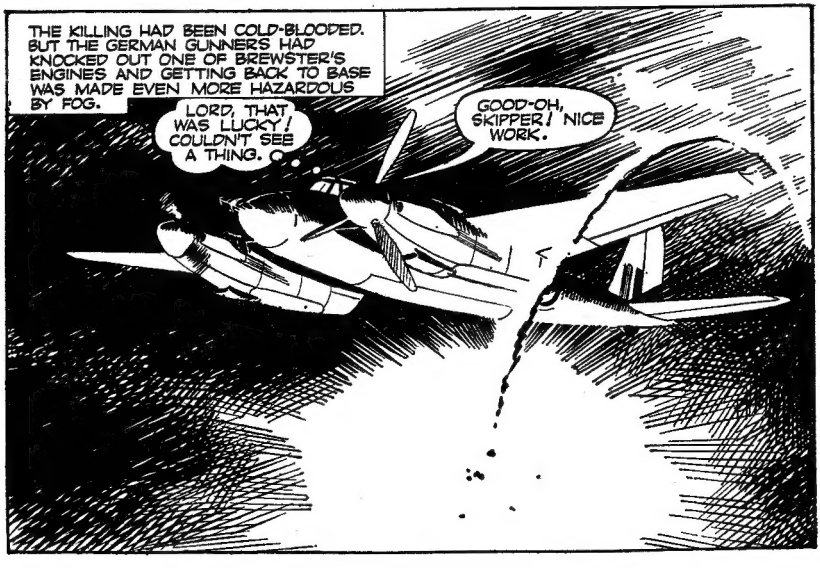
Chapter I. WEIGHT OF COMMAND



BILL GLANCED AT THE CLOCK...
WE'RE IN LUCK! THEY MUST BE EXPECTING THEIR OWN PLANES BACK. FLASH THEM THEIR CODE SIGNAL NOW. I'LL CIRCLE AND WAIT FOR THEM.
OKAY, SKIPPER!

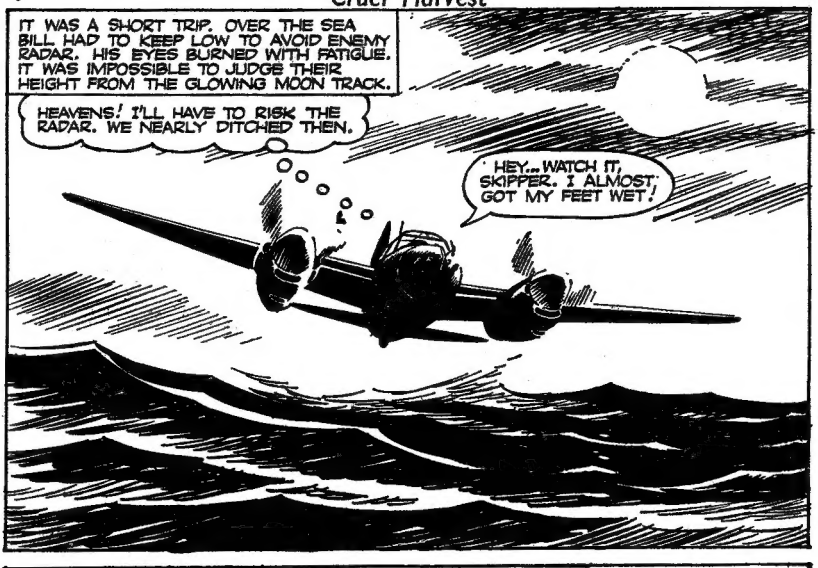

FOR THE GERMANS IT WAS HARD TRAINING. ALWAYS THE THREAT OF INTRUDERS, LIKE BILL BREWSTER. STILL, IT WAS GOOD EXPERIENCE, THE OBERST HAD SAID.
SOMEBODY'S HERE BEFORE US, HANS. IT WILL BE AN EASY LANDING WITH THIS MOON.

THE MOMENT BEFORE THE JUNKERS' WHEELS TOUCHED THE GROUND, A STREAM OF FIRE LANCED INTO THE PLANE FROM THE MOSQUITO ABOVE...
A-A-A-ARH!


THE KILLING HAD BEEN COLD-BLOODED. BUT THE GERMAN GUNNERS HAD KNOCKED OUT ONE OF BREWSTER'S ENGINES AND GETTING BACK TO BASE WAS MADE EVEN MORE HAZARDOUS BY FOG.
LORD, THAT WAS LUCKY! COULDN'T SEE A THING...
GOOD-OH, SKIPPER! NICE WORK.

AT DEBRIEFING, THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER SEEMED PIQUED THAT THEY ONLY BAGGED ONE PLANE.
WELL, I SUPPOSE ALL THAT TROUBLE WE TOOK WITH YOUR TIMING IS WORTH ONE SHOT DOWN. THE SKY SHOULD HAVE BEEN THICK WITH GERMANS. NEVER MIND, OFF YOU GO TO BED.
AND I BET YOU'VE BEEN CURLED UP NICE AND COSY IN AN ARM-CHAIR WAITING FOR US, YOU WINGLESS WONDER YOU!

BOTH THE AIRMEN WERE THANKFUL TO GET TO THEIR BILLETS, BUT THERE WAS AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE WAITING FOR THEM. THE CO. HAD JUST COME FROM THE TELEPHONE.
INTELLIGENCE
I CAN'T HELP IT, BILL. GROUP HAVE JUST BEEN ON THE BLOWER. URGENT CALL FOR AN INTRUDER TO GO TO A PLACE NEAR LE TOUQUET. MIGHT SHOOT DOWN A GENERAL. YOU'RE THE ONLY CREW UP. SO TAKE MY AIRCRAFT AND DON'T BREAK ANYTHING THIS TIME!
BLAZES! IT PUTTS WELL HAD TO BE US! WHAT A BIND!


IT WAS A SHORT TRIP. OVER THE SEA BILL HAD TO KEEP LOW TO AVOID ENEMY RADAR. HIS EYES BURNED WITH FATIGUE. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO JUDGE THEIR HEIGHT FROM THE GLOWING MOON TRACK.
HEAVENS! I'LL HAVE TO RISK THE RADAR. WE NEARLY DITCHED THEN.
HEY... WATCH IT, SKIPPER. I ALMOST GOT MY FEET WET!

BUT WHEN THEY ARRIVED, THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE SEEN EXCEPT UGLY FLASHES AND STREAMS OF TRACER. A DOZEN SEARCHLIGHTS SUDDENLY GRIPPED THEM.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. THE PLACE IS TOO HOT TO HANG AROUND! NO SIGN OF THE OLD BOY ANYWHERE?

BUT THERE WAS NO ANSWER FROM THE NAVIGATOR.
NOT ASLEEP AGAIN, FOR PETE'S SAKE!..... GOOD GRIEF... HE'S BEEN HIT!

THE FULL FURY OF THE MOMENT CLUTCHED BILL BREWSTER'S LEADEN BRAIN. IT WAS A MOMENT HE WAS NEVER TO FORGET.
I'LL HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO THE OLD MAN WHEN I GET BACK. C.O. OR NO C.O., HE'S NO RIGHT TO SEND HIS LADS OFF ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE. THEY WERE TIRED OUT... THEY'D DONE THEIR STINT FOR TONIGHT. C.O.s ARE ALL THE SAME. THEY DON'T CARE— NONE OF THEM CARE A DARN!

WHEN BILL BROUGHT THE SECOND BATTERED MOSQUITO BACK TO BASE, HIS VOICE RASPED OVER THE R.T.—
...AND GET THAT AMBULANCE TO THE END OF THE RUNWAY, MY NAVIGATOR'S HAD IT.

THE C.O. WAS IN THE CONTROL TOWER. HE HEARD THE CALL. ONE MORE LIFE... AND IT HAD BEEN HIS DECISION...
HAMILTON WAS ONE OF OUR BEST NAVIGATORS. BILL WILL BE BADLY UPSET... WHAT A SWINE HE MUST THINK I AM. THAT'S WHERE IT HURTS MOST. ORDERS ARE ORDERS. I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE SOFT... BETTER TAKE HIM OFF — HE NEEDS A REST ANYWAY.
SO BILL BREWSTER WAS GIVEN A WEEK'S LEAVE. HE HAD CAUGHT UP SOME OF HIS SLEEP, BUT HIS NAVIGATOR'S DEATH WAS STILL A VIVID AND PAINFUL MEMORY.
KEEP ON THE KERB, CORPORAL, OLD BREWSTER CUTS THE CORNERS A BIT FINE.
STOP
BUT THIS TIME, FLIGHT-LIEUT. BREWSTER WAS IN NO HURRY TO GET BACK. HE REPORTED TO THE C.O. WITH A LISTLESS, HEAVY HEART.
HULLO, BILL! HAD A SMASHING LEAVE, EH? YOU LUCKY SO-AND-SO!
I HATE THIS BREEZY BACK-SLAPPING RUBBISH. STILL, IT'S JUST A PROTECTION I SUPPOSE. WE'RE ALL AS SCARED AS THE NEXT MAN, REALLY.

BUT THE C.O. HAD SOME UNEXPECTED NEWS FOR HIM.
SIT DOWN, BREWSTER. I'VE GOT A BIT OF NEWS FOR YOU. COMMAND ARE POSTING YOU AS C.O. OF A FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL. I'LL BE SORRY TO LOSE YOU, OF COURSE, BUT YOU DESERVE PROMOTION.

THIS IS QUITE A SHOCK, SIR. I MEAN — WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT TRAINING? I'LL BE LOST AWAY FROM THE SQUADRON...

THE C.O. GAVE HIS OLD FLIGHT COMMANDER SOME SOUND ADVICE.
BELIEVE ME, BILL, YOU'RE LUCKY TO BE BROKEN INTO COMMAND THIS WAY. YOU WON'T BE SENDING YOUR CHAPS OUT NIGHT AFTER NIGHT LIKE I HAD TO SEND YOU AND HAMILTON LAST WEEK. A SQUADRON COMMANDER IS THE LONELIEST MAN IN THE AIR FORCE.
I THINK I UNDERSTAND, SIR.

THERE WAS A FAREWELL PARTY IN THE MESS THAT NIGHT.
"FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW AND SO SAY ALL OF US."
HEY! TELL ONE OF THE STEWARDS TO SEE TO THE BLACKOUT. THE MESS LIGHTS ARE SHINING LIKE A BEACON!

NEXT DAY, SQUADRON LEADER BILL BREWSTER, D.F.C., ARRIVED AT HIS NEW STATION. HE WAS IN COMMAND NOW. NOW IT WAS UP TO HIM TO GIVE THE ORDERS AND TO MAKE SURE THEY WERE CARRIED OUT TO THE LETTER.
CORPORAL! IF I WERE A GERMAN SPY I COULD HAVE WRECKED THIS PLACE IN HALF AN HOUR! WHY THE BLAZES DIDN'T YOU STOP ME? IF I SEE YOU WITHOUT A BELT AGAIN I'LL GIVE YOU 14 DAYS JANKERS.

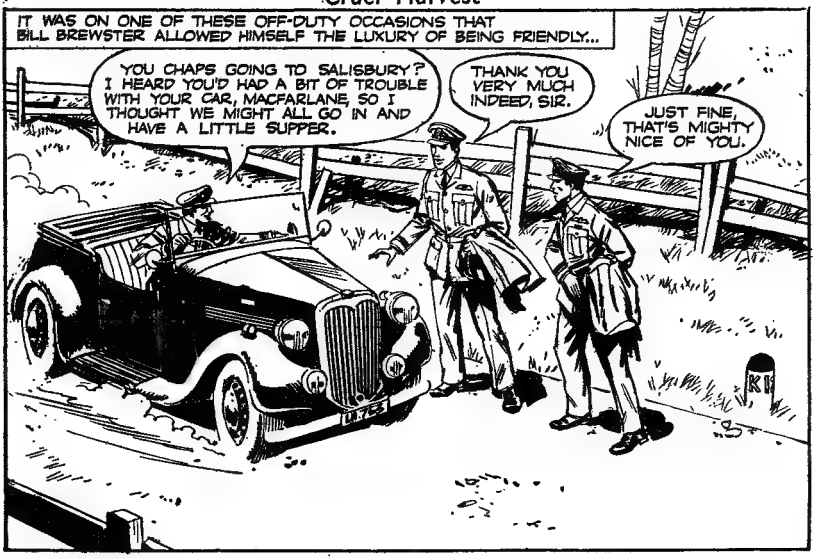
WHEN HE GOT TO HEADQUARTERS, HE SUMMONED THE FLIGHT COMMANDERS. HE STILL FELT STRANGELY UNCERTAIN OF HIMSELF AS FLIGHT LIEUT. "DINGLE" DELL CAME SMARTLY INTO HIS OFFICE.
DELL. SIR. 'D' FLIGHT. I PASSED FLIGHT LIEUTENANT MACFARLANE BY THE HANGARS, SIR, HAVING TROUBLE WITH HIS CAR. HE'LL BE HERE DIRECTLY...
OH, VERY WELL. ANYWAY, GOOD AFTERNOON, MY NAME'S BREWSTER.
THERE WAS AN AWKWARD SILENCE.

A MINUTE LATER "A" FLIGHT COMMANDER, "CHUCK" MACFARLANE, D.F.C., CANADIAN EX-BATTLE OF BRITAIN PILOT OPENED THE DOOR.
YOU GUYS WANNA WATCH THIS LOCAL GAS, MY CARBURETTOR'S FULL OF MUD. OH, SORRY, SIR! MACFARLANE'S THE NAME, I DIDN'T REALISE...

A GREAT SURGE OF ANGER ENGULFED BILL BREWSTER. TO HIS ASTONISHMENT HE FOUND GREAT DIFFICULTY IN CONTROLLING HIMSELF. HIS JAWS WERE CLENCHED AS HE FORCED OUT THE WORDS.
'YOU'RE 'A' FLIGHT COMMANDER, AREN'T YOU? NOW YOU ARE HERE, WE CAN GET DOWN TO BUSINESS.
AND YET BILL HIMSELF HAD SPOKEN IN MUCH THE SAME BREEZY WAY AS MACFARLANE, LESS THAN A FORTNIGHT AGO, TO HIS OLD C.O. PERHAPS THAT WAS WHY HE CHECKED HIS TEMPER, BUT HE WAS GLAD WHEN LATER ON THEY BOTH LEFT HIS OFFICE.
DELL'S O.K., SOUND AS A ROCK. DON'T LIKE THIS 'CHUCK' FELLOW. TOO SURE OF HIMSELF, GLAMOUR BOY, I SUPPOSE. STILL, I'M GLAD I DIDN'T SHOOT HIM DOWN. WE'LL SEE...
CHUCK WAS DISAPPOINTED. HE OPENLY DESPISED ANY OFFICER WHO HAD NOT BEEN ON OPS. YET HERE AT LAST WAS A C.O. WHOSE RECORD AND D.F.C. SPOKE FOR THEMSELVES, AND YET HE SEEMED WORSE THAN HIS PREDECESSORS.
HEY, DINGLE, OLD MAN, WHAT SAY WE HIT THE TOWN TONIGHT? THIS NEW GUY SEEMS MIGHTY SORE AT ME FOR SOMETHIN'...
I HEAR HE WAS A DARNED GOOD MOSSIE PILOT, I EXPECT HE MISSES IT LIKE WE DO.

FLIGHT LIEUT. "DINGLE" DELL EYED HIS FELLOW FLIGHT COMMANDER RETREATING IN A CLOUD OF SMOKE. HE REMEMBERED HOW HE HAD ONCE BROUGHT A WHITLEY BACK FROM BREMEN ON ONE ENGINE.
IF THIS C.O. ONLY KNEW WHAT A HECK OF A GOOD PILOT CHUCK IS... I SUPPOSE IT'S UP TO CHUCK TO MEND HIS WAYS A BIT, AND AS LONG AS BREWSTER DOESN'T GET TOO POMPOUS IT'LL BE O.K.
10 A
BREWSTER DID NOT BECOME POMPOUS, BUT NEITHER DID HE BECOME FRIENDLY— A FACT THAT BOTH CHUCK AND DINGLE RESENTED AS THE DAYS WENT BY...

FOR THESE TWO BUDDIES, THE TRAINING WENT ON... RELIEVED BY AN OCCASIONAL NIGHT OUT—
YOU'LL SCARE ME ONE DAY WITH YOUR CLOSE FORMATION FLYING. IT'S A WONDER YOUR PILOTS DON'T COMPLAIN.
DO THEM A DARNED LOT OF GOOD, I RECKON. SAY, WE CAN JUST MAKE THE BUS FOR TOWN, MY JALLOPPY'S BUST AGAIN, MUST BE THE PETROL..

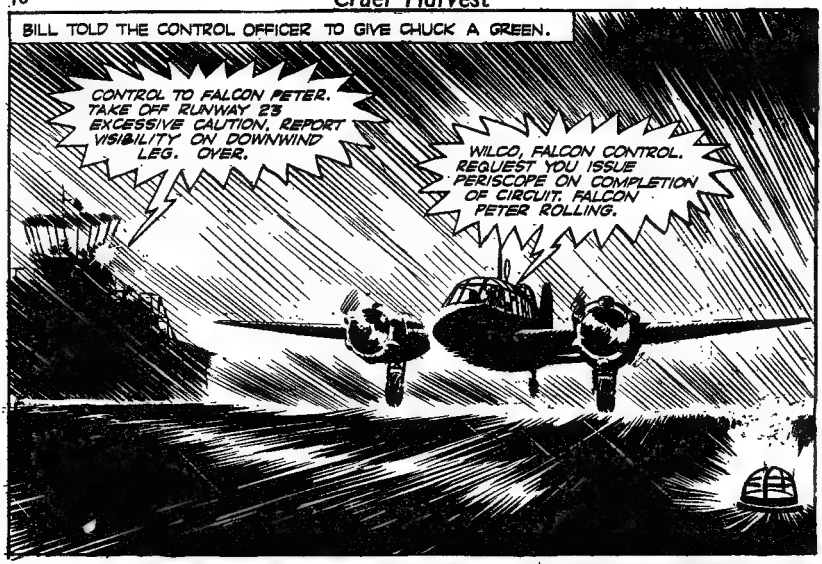

IT WAS ON ONE OF THESE OFF-DUTY OCCASIONS THAT BILL BREWSTER ALLOWED HIMSELF THE LUXURY OF BEING FRIENDLY...
YOU CHAPS GOING TO SALISBURY? I HEARD YOU'D HAD A BIT OF TROUBLE WITH YOUR CAR, MACFARLANE, SO I THOUGHT WE MIGHT ALL GO IN AND HAVE A LITTLE SUPPER.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED, SIR.
JUST FINE, THAT'S MIGHTY NICE OF YOU.
K II

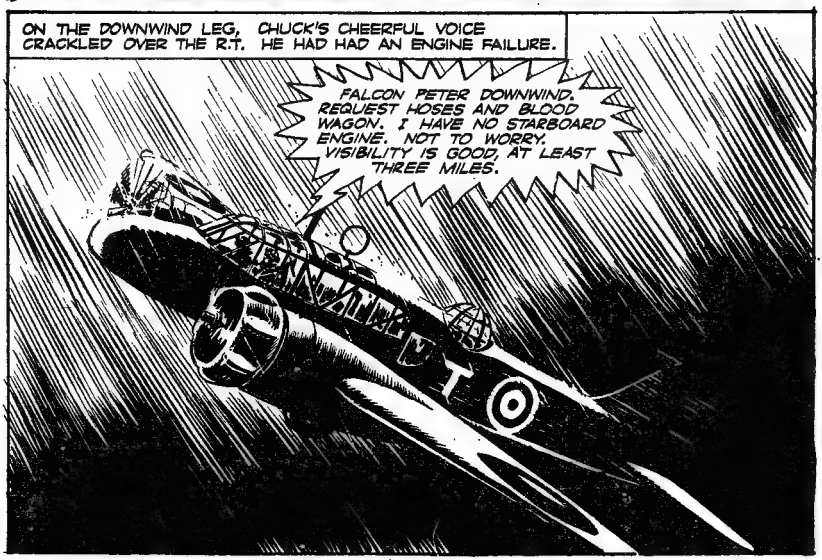
SO BILL SUCCEEDED, WHERE SO MANY C.O.S HAD FAILED, IN DISTINGUISHING ON-DUTY HOURS FROM OFF-DUTY HOURS. BUT HE HAD ALSO LAID HIMSELF OPEN TO THE HEARTACHE OF FRIENDSHIP. A WEEK LATER HE WAS TO LEARN A BITTER LESSON.
DID YOU SEE THE MET. FORECAST? I RECKON NIGHT FLYING WILL BE SCRUBBED.
OLD DINGLE'S MY INSTRUCTOR. DOESN'T LIKE BAD WEATHER. SAYS THERE'S NO POINT IN TAKING CHANCES WITH PUPILS. HE'LL GET THE C.O. TO SCRUB IT...

BILL CLIMBED UP THE CONTROL TOWER STEPS. HE HAD SENSED THAT ONE OF HIS FLIGHT COMMANDERS WAS DOUBTFUL ABOUT THE WEATHER.
I WISH I HAD MORE EXPERIENCE WITH THESE PUPIL PILOTS. BUT I MUSTN'T MOLLY-CODDLE THEM.

IN THE TOWER HE FOUND DINGLE LOOKING AT THE WEATHER CHART.
A BIT DICKY, THIS, SIR. THERE'S A DEPRESSION MOVING IN AND THE CLOUD BASE IS PRETTY LOW.
WELL, DINGLE, YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT THE GAME THAN I DO. BUT MY INSTINCT SAYS PRESS ON. THEY'LL BE ON OPS SOON, THESE CHAPS, SO THEY MIGHT AS WELL GET USED TO BAD WEATHER.

OUT AT DISPERSAL, CHUCK MACFARLANE WAS STRAPPING HIMSELF INTO AN ANSON. HE WAS GOING TO DO ONE CIRCUIT WITH HIS STAR PUPIL AND THEN LET HIM GO SOLO.
BOY, I LOVE THIS ENGLISH WEATHER! STILL IT'S JUST THE TICKET FOR YOUR FIRST NIGHT SOLO, TALLON. PLENTY OF OPPOSITION, NOTHIN' BETTER.
GLORY, I SUPPOSE HE'S RIGHT. I TRUST OLD CHUCK ANYWAY. I MUSTN'T LET HIM DOWN.


BILL TOLD THE CONTROL OFFICER TO GIVE CHUCK A GREEN.
CONTROL TO FALCON PETER. TAKE OFF RUNWAY 23 EXCESSIVE CAUTION. REPORT VISIBILITY ON DOWNWIND LEG. OVER.
WILCO, FALCON CONTROL. REQUEST YOU ISSUE PERISCOPE ON COMPLETION OF CIRCUIT. FALCON PETER ROLLING.


ON THE DOWNWIND LEG, CHUCK'S CHEERFUL VOICE CRACKLED OVER THE R.T. HE HAD HAD AN ENGINE FAILURE.
FALCON PETER DOWNWIND. REQUEST HOSES AND BLOOD WAGON. I HAVE NO STARBOARD ENGINE. NOT TO WORRY. VISIBILITY IS GOOD, AT LEAST THREE MILES.

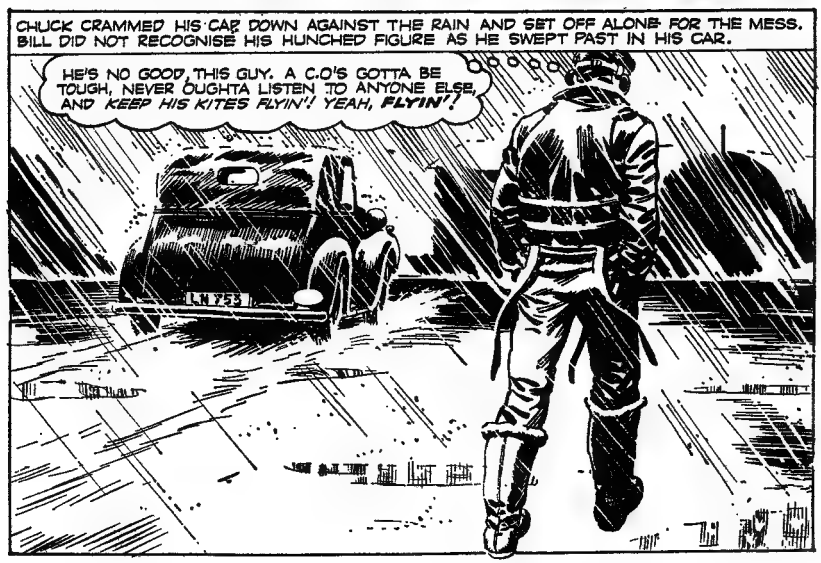
BACK IN THE TOWER, BILL WAS SUDDENLY MUCH MORE WORRIED THAN HE WOULD HAVE ADMITTED. MOREOVER, HE WAS MORE WORRIED THAN DINGLE.
NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT OLD CHUCK. HE'S AS SAFE AS HOUSES IN AN EMERGENCY.
THEN WHY AM I SO WORRIED? I'D BETTER SCRUB FLYING. NONE OF THE OTHER INSTRUCTORS COULD BE TRUSTED TO DO THIS IN AN EMERGENCY. DINGLE WAS RIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE.
FALCON PETER FINALS. OUT.

CHUCK MADE A PERFECTLY NORMAL SINGLE-ENGINED LANDING. THEN TO HIS AMAZEMENT, HE SAW A RED VEREY LIGHT ARCING UP INTO THE NIGHT.
WELL, I'LL BE DARNED! WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT A GUY LIKE BREWSTER, EX OPS.— THE LOT, WOULD CHEAT THESE PUPS OUT OF A LITTLE EXCITING FLYING.
SEEMED AS THOUGH WE HAD BAGS OF VISIBILITY ONCE WE GOT AIRBORNE, SIR.

CHUCK CUT OFF THE GOOD ENGINE AND LEFT THE MACHINE TO BE TOWED AWAY FROM THE RUNWAY. HE CLAMBERED OUT AND JUMPED INTO THE WAITING FIRE ENGINE.
C'MON, SERGEANT, PUT THAT FOOT O' YOURS DOWN REAL HARD AND DROP ME AT THE TOWER. I'M GONNA FIND OUT WHY THEY'VE SCRUBBED FLYING.
CAN'T COMPLAIN, MYSELF, SIR. I'M LOOKIN' FORWARD TO A NICE HOT CUPPA TEA.

CHUCK MET DINGLE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STEPS.
WHAT IN THE HECK DOES THE OLD MAN THINK HE'S PLAYING AT? YOU JUST WAIT TILL I SEE HIM, DINGLE!
WELL, ACTUALLY I ADVISED HIM TO SCRUB FLYING.

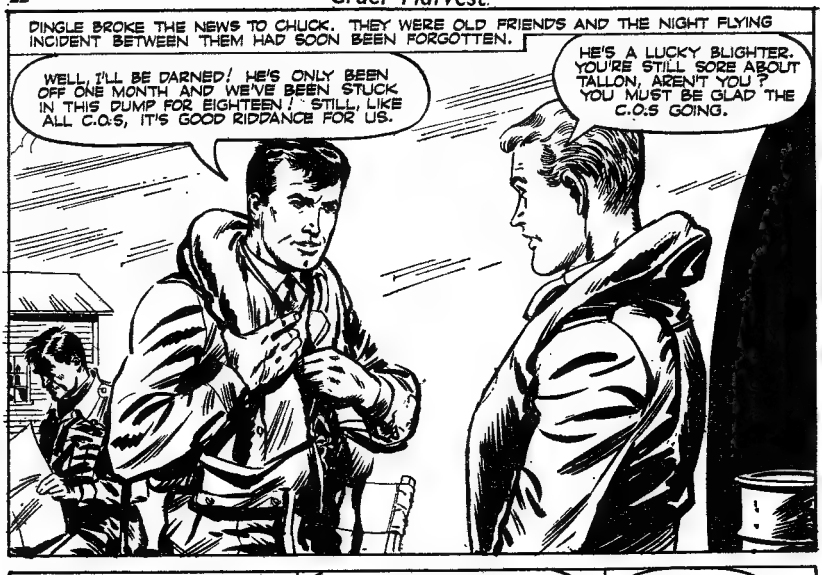
CHUCK EXPLODED. WERE THESE TWO EX-OPERATIONAL PILOTS PHONEYS? HE HAD TOLD THEM THAT IT WAS PERFECTLY O.K. ON THE DOWNWIND LEG.
YOU WHAT? WELL, I'LL BE...


CHUCK CRAMMED HIS CAP DOWN AGAINST THE RAIN AND SET OFF ALONE FOR THE MESS. BILL DID NOT RECOGNISE HIS HUNCHED FIGURE AS HE SWEPT PAST IN HIS CAR.
HE'S NO GOOD, THIS GUY. A C.O'S GOTTA BE TOUGH, NEVER OUGHTA LISTEN TO ANYONE ELSE, AND KEEP HIS KITES FLYIN'! YEAH, FLYIN'!

BILL WAS ALREADY IN THE MESS WHEN CHUCK STORMED IN.
YOU BROUGHT HER IN NICELY, CHUCK, COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT BETTER MYSELF.
WHY THE BLAZES DID YOU CANCEL FLYING? THAT DELL GUY'S TOO GOLDARNED CAUTIOUS. YOU WANNA KNOW SOMP'N? YA CHEATED YOUNG TALLON OUT OF HIS FIRST SOLO. I LIKE GUYS THAT PRESS ON, THAT'S ALL!

BILL'S SUDDEN CHANGE OF MOOD WAS LIKE A WHIRLWIND. HE ROUNDED ON THE FLIGHT COMMANDER.
YOUR PUPIL'S LUCKY TO BE ALIVE, MACFARLANE. AND WHEN I WANT ADVICE FROM YOU, I'LL ASK FOR IT. NOW GET OUT OF MY WAY!

Chapter 2. THE NEW SQUADRON


DINGLE BROKE THE NEWS TO CHUCK. THEY WERE OLD FRIENDS AND THE NIGHT FLYING INCIDENT BETWEEN THEM HAD SOON BEEN FORGOTTEN.
WELL, I'LL BE DARNED! HE'S ONLY BEEN OFF ONE MONTH AND WE'VE BEEN STUCK IN THIS DUMP FOR EIGHTEEN! STILL, LIKE ALL C.O.S, IT'S GOOD RIDDANCE FOR US.
HE'S A LUCKY BLIGHTER. YOU'RE STILL SORE ABOUT TALLON, AREN'T YOU? YOU MUST BE GLAD THE C.O.S GOING.

AT COMMAND H.Q., SQUADRON LEADER BREWSTER WAS GIVEN HIS INSTRUCTIONS. HE WAS TO LEAD A SQUADRON OF MUSTANG ARMY SUPPORT FIGHTER BOMBERS.
HERE ARE THE LISTS AND ORDERS, BREWSTER. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK ME BEFORE I HAND YOU OVER TO THE EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL SECTION?
DO I HAVE ANY CHANCE OF CHOOSING MY FLIGHT COMMANDERS, SIR?
FRANCE

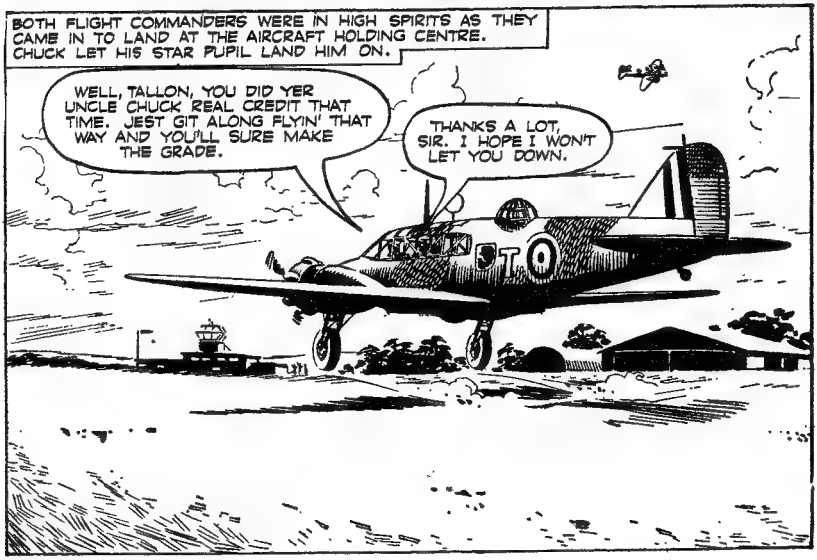
ON THE WAY DOWN TO HEADQUARTERS, BILL HAD DONE SOME HARD THINKING. HE WANTED MEN THAT HE KNEW AND WHO KNEW HIM.
I'D LIKE TO TAKE TWO CHAPS FROM THE SCHOOL, SIR. THEY'VE BOTH BEEN ON OPS, AND I KNOW THEIR STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS. I'M SURE THEY'D LEAP AT THE CHANCE OF GETTING BACK OPERATIONAL.
GOOD THING YOU ASKED ME, BREWSTER. THESE ADMIN. TYPES WOULD NEVER HAVE ALLOWED YOU TO MESS UP THEIR LISTS. YES, I'LL FIX THAT.

BILL WAS SURE HE HAD DONE THE RIGHT THING. CHUCK HAD NEVER FORGIVEN HIM AND HE KNEW IT. BUT THEN IT WAS CHUCK WHO HAD WANTED TO PRESS ON IN SPITE OF HIS ORDERS... AND, AS C.O., IT WAS VITAL TO MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE AT ALL TIMES.
I KNOW I'M NOT STILL C.O., CORPORAL, BUT THAT WON'T PREVENT ME FROM REPORTING YOUR DIRTY BUTTONS TO MY SUCCESSOR!
ITN

BILL FOUND HIS SUCCESSOR ALREADY INSTALLED AT HEADQUARTERS.
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO BE BACK, BUT I'M TAKING THE TWO FLIGHT COMMANDERS WITH ME TO MY NEW SQUADRON. COULD YOU ARRANGE FOR THEM TO FLY OVER TO COLLECT THE MUSTANGS? THE PUPILS CAN FLY THE ANSONS BACK HERE...
I SHOULD THINK SO, OLD MAN. I SUPPOSE THERE'LL BE SOME OF THE STATION LEFT AFTER YOU'VE GONE? DID I OVERHEAR YOU SAYING YOU'D REPORT A CORPORAL TO ME FOR DIRTY BUTTONS? SHALL I BE LOSING HIM AS WELL?

BILL KNEW THAT HE HAD BEEN HIGH-HANDED. AUTHORITY HAD AFFECTED HIM THAT WAY. THEN HE SAW CHUCK AND DINGLE.
WELL IF THAT DOESN'T BEAT ALL! I THOUGHT WE'D GOT RID OF HIM.
IT'S HIS CAR ALL RIGHT.
IS THAT REALLY ALL THEY THINK OF ME?

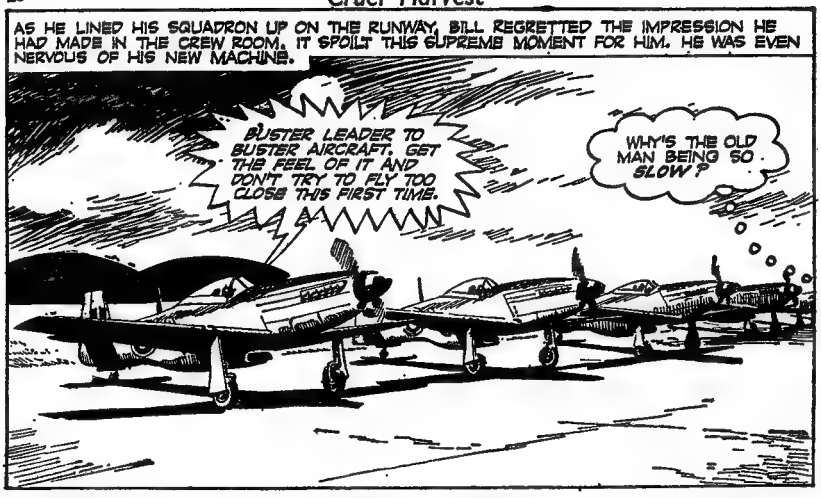
BUT THEIR WHOOP OF JOY WHEN THEY HEARD THE NEWS DULLED THE EDGE OF HIS CURT GREETING, AND HE WAS GLAD.
I'M SORRY TO SAY YOU'LL HAVE TO PUT UP WITH ME A BIT LONGER. THE C.O. HAS KINDLY LENT YOU TWO AIRCRAFT TO FLY OVER TO DISBURY TO COLLECT MUSTANGS WITH THE REST OF THE SQUADRON. YOU'RE TO BE MY FLIGHT COMMANDERS IN A NEW SQUADRON.
SQUADRON?... MUSTANGS? ...I CAN'T BELIEVE IT....!
OPS. AGAIN?... YIPPEE!

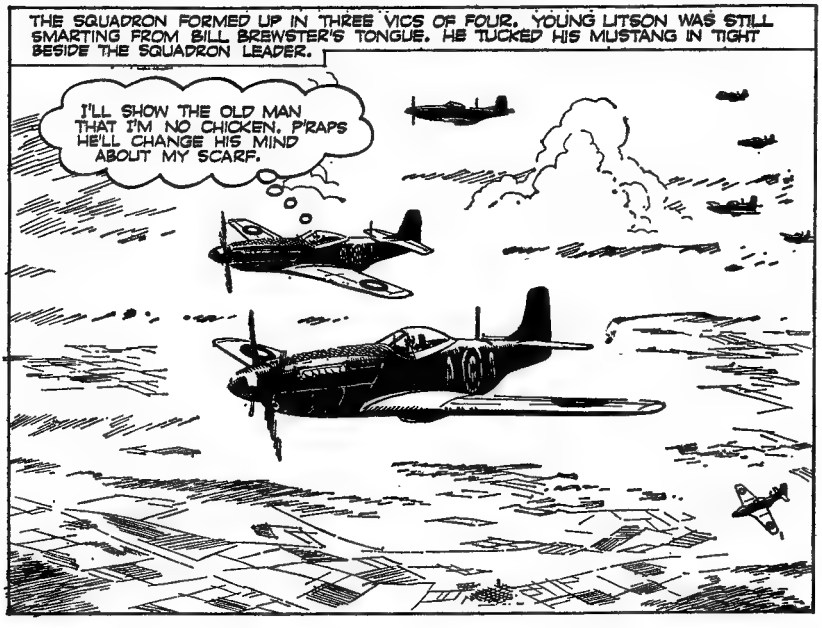

BOTH FLIGHT COMMANDERS WERE IN HIGH SPIRITS AS THEY CAME IN TO LAND AT THE AIRCRAFT HOLDING CENTRE. CHUCK LET HIS STAR PUPIL LAND HIM ON.
WELL, TALLON, YOU DID YER UNCLE CHUCK REAL CREDIT THAT TIME. JEST GIT ALONG FLYIN' THAT WAY AND YOU'LL SURE MAKE THE GRADE.
THANKS A LOT, SIR. I HOPE I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.

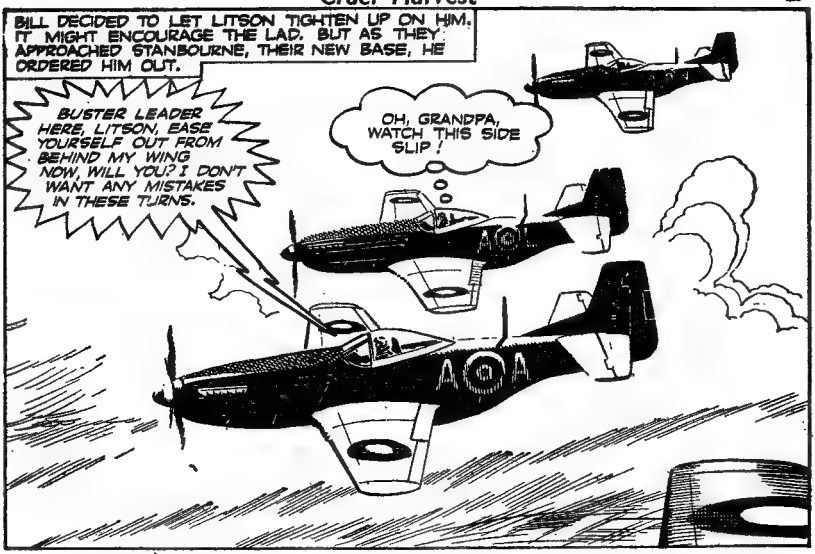
THE PUPILS CAUGHT THE EXCITEMENT OF THEIR OFFICERS. IT NEVER OCCURRED TO THEM THAT THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE LONG TO LIVE ON THE CREST OF THIS WAVE.
THAT'LL BE THE DAY, WHEN WE GET ON OPS, TALLON. LUCKY DEVILS!
I'VE NEVER SEEN MEN SO EXCITED. MAKES YOU FEEL GLAD FOR 'EM.

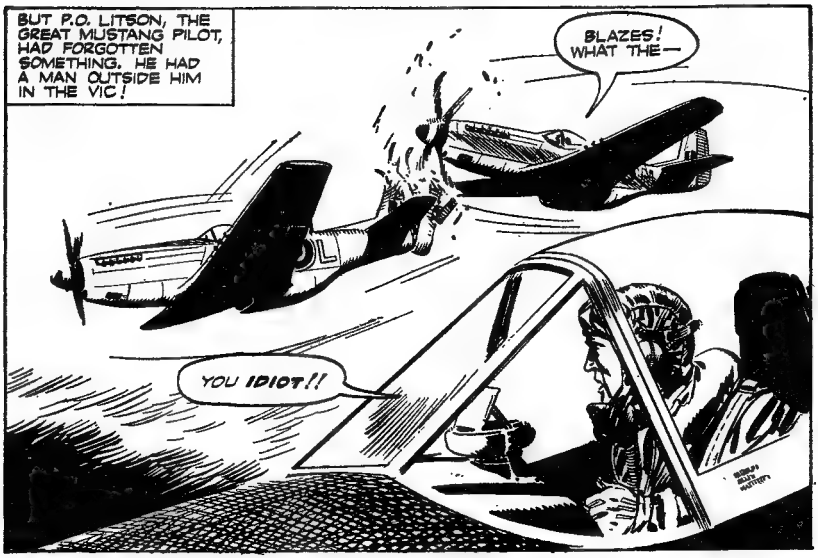
CHUCK AND DINGLE STRODE OVER TO THE CREW ROOM. ALL OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SQUADRON HAD ARRIVED EXCEPT THE C.O.
ARE YOU GUYS FOR THE RODEO? THE C.O. ISN'T HERE YET, HUH?
THIS IS GOING TO BE A BIT STRANGE, THEY'RE ALL SO YOUNG. MUSTN'T TREAT THEM LIKE PUPILS.

AMONG THE PILOTS THERE WAS ONE, P.O. LITSON, WHO HAD A NUMBER OF HOURS ON MUSTANGS. HE HAD DONE HIS OPERATIONAL TRAINING IN CANADA. HE HAD OBVIOUSLY APPOINTED HIMSELF TEMPORARY C.O.
HEY, THAT'S A CANADIAN VOICE. NICE TO HAVE YOU WITH US, BUD. I WAS JUST GIVING THESE FELLOWS A FEW TIPS ABOUT THE MUSTANGS— SAY, HOW ABOUT THAT RODEO JOKE OF YOURS, EH? I LIKED THAT!
TAKE IT EASY, FELLER. I MIGHT BE YA FLIGHT COMMANDER.
GOOD OLD CHUCK!
BILL BREWSTER HAD REALLY STEPPED ON THE GAS AND ARRIVED ONLY A FEW MOMENTS AFTER THE OTHER TWO. HE SAW LITSON'S FLASHING SCARF.
TAKE THAT RAG OFF YOUR NECK, MY LAD. I DON'T WANT ANY OF THAT SORT OF NONSENSE IN MY SQUADRON. YOU'D BETTER FLY NO. 1. WITH ME.
WELL, OF ALL THE...!
HERE WE GO AGAIN...!


AS HE LINED HIS SQUADRON UP ON THE RUNWAY, BILL REGRETTED THE IMPRESSION HE HAD MADE IN THE CREW ROOM. IT SPOILT THIS SUPREME MOMENT FOR HIM. HE WAS EVEN NERVOUS OF HIS NEW MACHINE.
BUSTER LEADER TO BUSTER AIRCRAFT. GET THE FEEL OF IT AND DON'T TRY TO FLY TOO CLOSE THIS FIRST TIME.
WHY'S THE OLD MAN BEING SO SLOW?

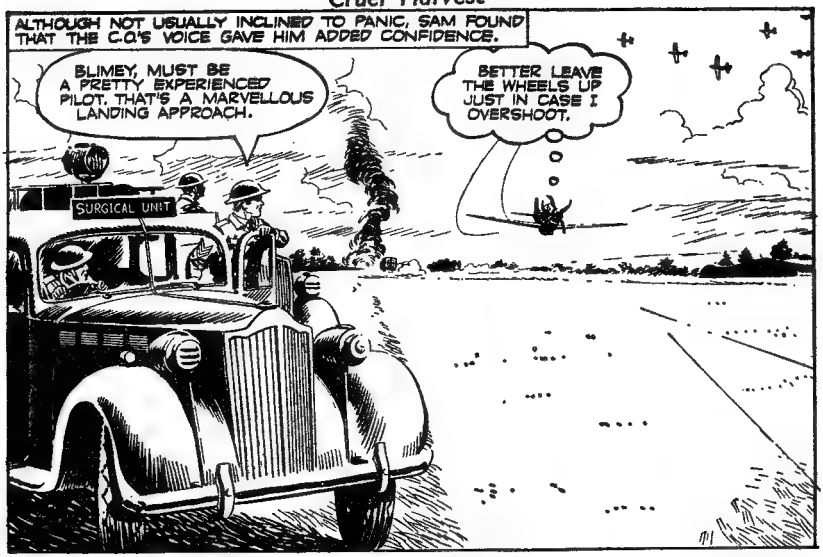

THE SQUADRON FORMED UP IN THREE VICS OF FOUR. YOUNG LITSON WAS STILL SMARTING FROM BILL BREWSTER'S TONGUE. HE TUCKED HIS MUSTANG IN TIGHT BESIDE THE SQUADRON LEADER.
I'LL SHOW THE OLD MAN THAT I'M NO CHICKEN. P'RAPS HE'LL CHANGE HIS MIND ABOUT MY SCARF.

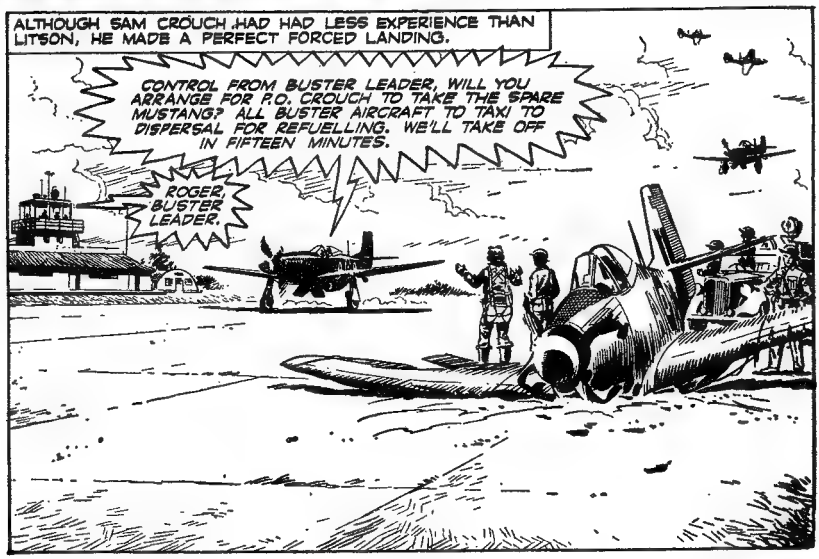

BILL DECIDED TO LET LITSON TIGHTEN UP ON HIM. IT MIGHT ENCOURAGE THE LAD. BUT AS THEY APPROACHED STANBOURNE, THEIR NEW BASE, HE ORDERED HIM OUT.
BUSTER LEADER HERE, LITSON, EASE YOURSELF OUT FROM BEHIND MY WING NOW, WILL YOU? I DON'T WANT ANY MISTAKES IN THESE TURNS.
OH, GRANDPA, WATCH THIS SIDE SLIP!


BUT P.O. LITSON, THE GREAT MUSTANG PILOT, HAD FORGOTTEN SOMETHING. HE HAD A MAN OUTSIDE HIM IN THE VIC!
BLAZES! WHAT THE—
YOU IDIOT!!

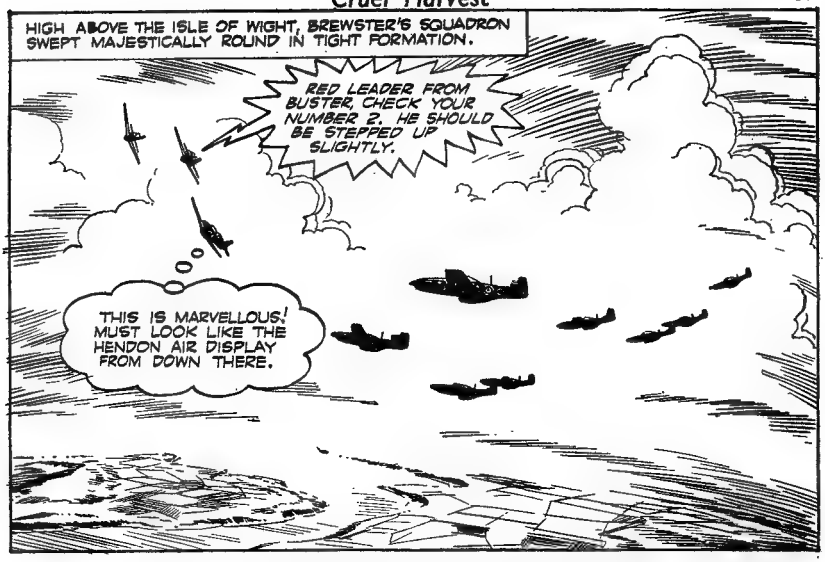
LITSON'S MUSTANG CARTWHEELED CRAZILY DOWN. NOT HAVING SECURED HIS SAFETY HARNESS, HE WAS CRUSHED INTO ONE CORNER OF THE COCKPIT BY THE FEROCIOUS SPIN.
A-A-A-A-R-H!
THE OTHER MUSTANG WAS PILOTED BY P.O. SAM "SHORTY" CROUCH, A TALL CHEERFUL YOUNG MAN WITH A LIKING FOR PRACTICAL JOKES. THIS ONE HE DID NOT LIKE!
STUPID FOOL! TRIED TO BE TOO CLEVER. NOW I'VE GOT TO GET THIS KITE DOWN SOMEWHERE. I WONDER WHERE?
IT WAS A MOMENT OF HORROR FOR THE WHOLE SQUADRON. FOR BILL BREWSTER IT WAS DOUBLY CRUEL. BUT HIS LONG OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE HAD GIVEN HIM IRON SELF-CONTROL. HIS VOICE OVER THE R.T. WAS VERY CALM.
YOU CAN MAKE THE AIRFIELD, CROUCH. DON'T WORRY ABOUT WARNING THEM, I'LL DO THAT FOR YOU.

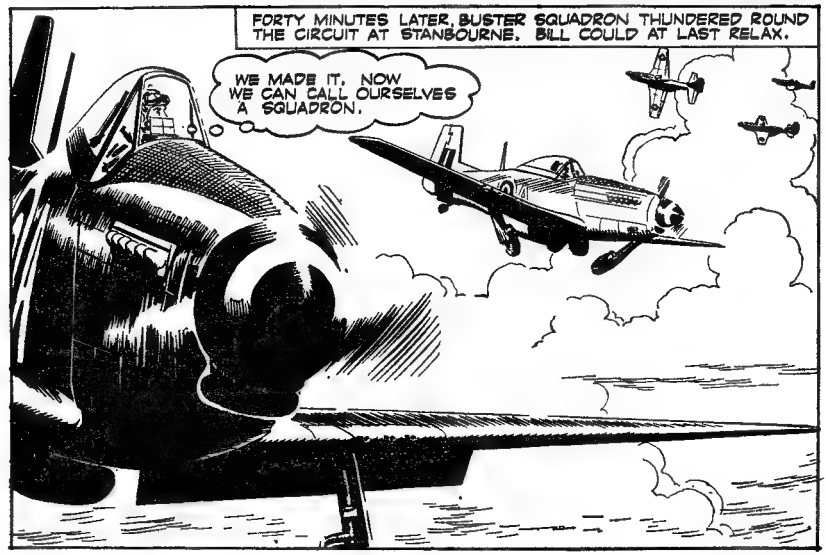
Cruel Harvest





BILL KNEW IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO RESTORE MORALE. HE CALLED HIS PILOTS TOGETHER AT DISPERSAL.
NOW YOU ALL SEE WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU THINK YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT FLYING. CONTROL ARE GETTING READY A SPARE AIRCRAFT FOR YOU, CROUCH. YOU'LL FLY AS MY WINGER.
CRIKEY, I'M SHAKING LIKE A LEAF — SO THIS IS OPERATIONAL FLYING!
MOST PILOTS WERE FRANKLY SCARED. BUT TO A FEW, IT WAS AN IMMEDIATE TONIC.
BUSTER SQUADRON AIRBORNE, TURNING PORT AND LEAVING CIRCUIT, OVER.
MAYBE BILL BREWSTER'S O.K. AFTER ALL. HE WAS DARNED RIGHT TO GET US ALL AIRBORNE AGAIN. SHOW THE KIDS WE MEAN BUSINESS...

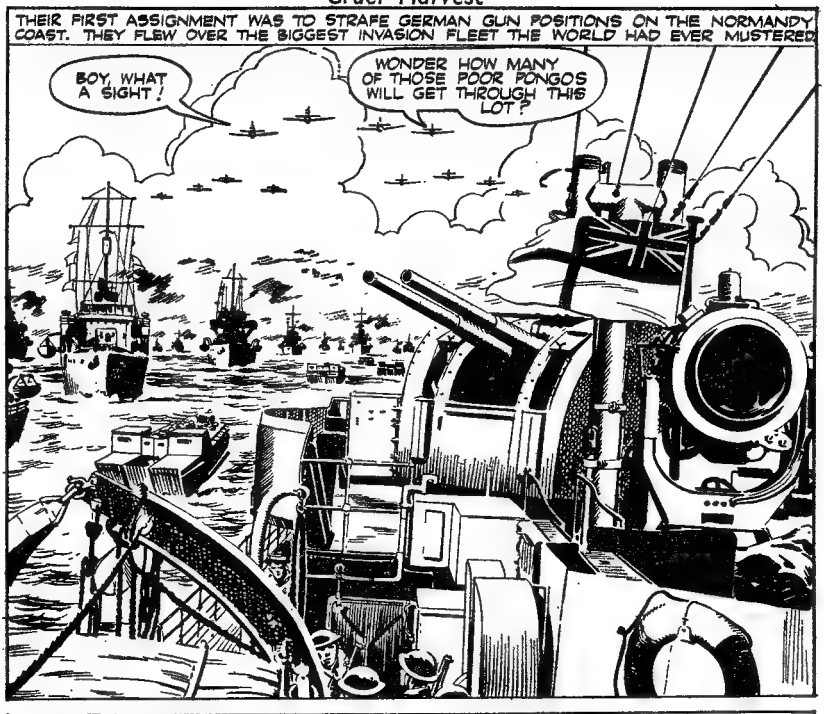

HIGH ABOVE THE ISLE OF WIGHT, BREWSTER'S SQUADRON SWEPT MAJESTICALLY ROUND IN TIGHT FORMATION.
RED LEADER FROM BUSTER, CHECK YOUR NUMBER 2. HE SHOULD BE STEPPED UP SLIGHTLY.
THIS IS MARVELLOUS! MUST LOOK LIKE THE HENDON AIR DISPLAY FROM DOWN THERE.

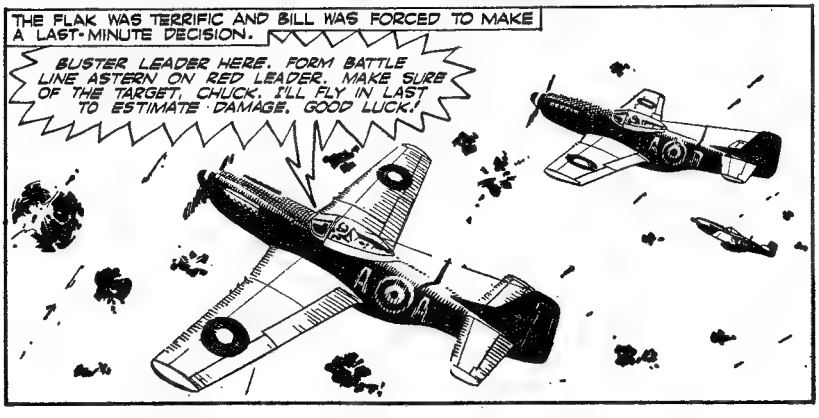

FORTY MINUTES LATER, BUSTER SQUADRON THUNDERED ROUND THE CIRCUIT AT STANBOURNE. BILL COULD AT LAST RELAX.
WE MADE IT. NOW WE CAN CALL OURSELVES A SQUADRON.

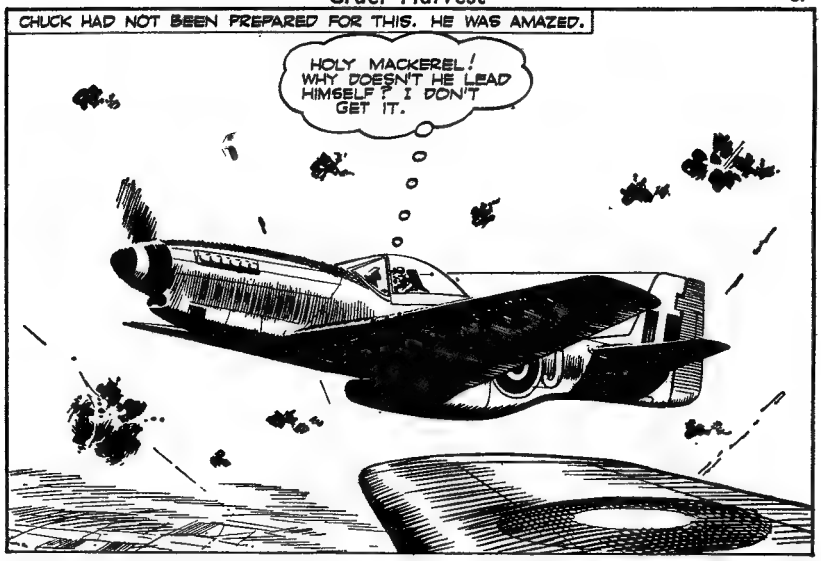
Chapter 3. CALCULATED RISK

THAT EVENING BILL SAW CHUCK AND DINGLE SET OFF TOGETHER FOR A LOCAL RECONNAISSANCE.
THEY'RE HAPPY NOW, THOSE TWO. I KNEW THEY WOULD BE. THEY'LL BUILD ME A FINE SQUADRON. I WISH THEY WEREN'T SO CLOSE THOUGH. IT HURTS SO MUCH MORE IF ONE OF THEM GETS THE CHOP... OR GETS POSTED.
"WE'RE OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD, THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ"...!!

...OR IF I GO, TOO


THEIR FIRST ASSIGNMENT WAS TO STRAFE GERMAN GUN POSITIONS ON THE NORMANDY COAST. THEY FLEW OVER THE BIGGEST INVASION FLEET THE WORLD HAD EVER MUSTERED.
BOY, WHAT A SIGHT!
WONDER HOW MANY OF THOSE POOR PONGOS WILL GET THROUGH THIS LOT?


THE FLAK WAS TERRIFIC AND BILL WAS FORCED TO MAKE A LAST-MINUTE DECISION.
BUSTER LEADER HERE. FORM BATTLE LINE ASTERN ON RED LEADER. MAKE SURE OF THE TARGET, CHUCK. I'LL FLY IN LAST TO ESTIMATE DAMAGE. GOOD LUCK!


CHUCK HAD NOT BEEN PREPARED FOR THIS. HE WAS AMAZED.
HOLY MACKEREL! WHY DOESN'T HE LEAD HIMSELF? I DON'T GET IT.

BUT CHUCK, IN SPITE OF HIS BATTLE OF BRITAIN EXPERIENCE, HAD NOT SEEN MUCH FLAK. DINGLE HAD— AND HE UNDERSTOOD.
THIS IS LIKE THE RUHR! BILL WILL GET THE LOT FLUNG AT HIM BY THE TIME HE GOES IN.

666 SQUADRON GUNS PASTED THE GERMAN BATTERY UNTIL THE MOUNTINGS WERE REDUCED TO A PILE OF SPLINTERED STEEL. ONLY ONE POSITION REMAINED UNTOUCHED.

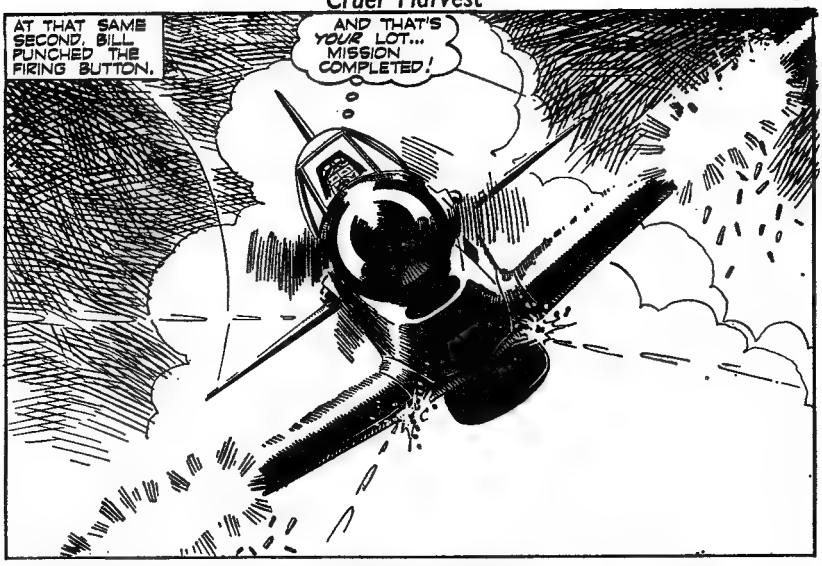
HERE IS ANOTHER. GET HIM — NOW!

HIMMEL! THEY'VE MISSED US.

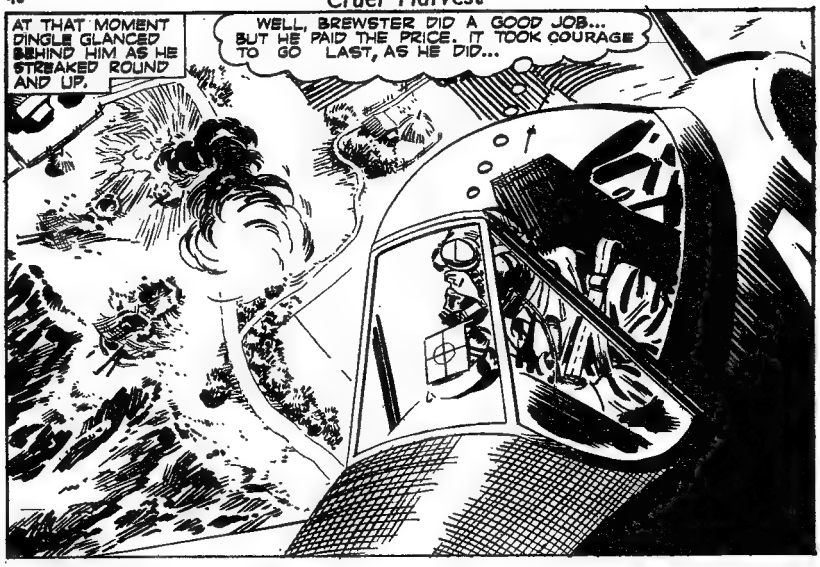
A-A-A-A-G-H!

BILL DIVED IN LOWER AND SLOWER THAN THE REST. HIS ORDERS HAD BEEN TO ANNIHILATE THE GUN POSITIONS AND HE WAS DETERMINED TO ASSESS THE DAMAGE ACCURATELY. HE KNEW THE RISK HE WAS TAKING.

FIRE!!


AT THAT SAME SECOND, BILL PUNCHED THE FIRING BUTTON.
AND THAT'S YOUR LOT... MISSION COMPLETED!

IT WAS ALL OVER. BOTH ENEMIES HAD AIMED TRUE. BILL'S SHATTERED MUSTANG SLAMMED INTO THE GERMAN GUN-PIT.
A-A-A-A-G-H!


AT THAT MOMENT DINGLE GLANCED BEHIND HIM AS HE STREAKED ROUND AND UP.
WELL, BREWSTER DID A GOOD JOB... BUT HE PAID THE PRICE. IT TOOK COURAGE TO GO LAST, AS HE DID...

AS DINGLE REFORMED WITH THE REST OF THE SQUADRON, HE HAD A SUDDEN THOUGHT...
THAT MEANS ONE OF US FOR C.O. GLAD CHUCK'S LEADING NOW, ANYWAY.
K A

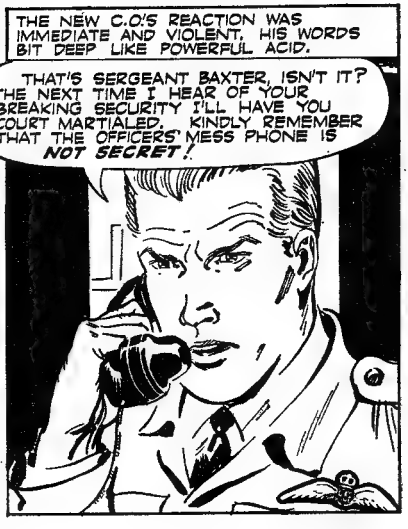
ALL THE REST OF THEM HAD ESCAPED THE SURGE OF CONCENTRATED VENOM THAT THE GERMAN GUNNERS HAD FLUNG AT THEM AS THEY PLUNGED INTO THE ATTACK. SUCH WAS THE DAILY MIRACLE OF OPS.
ANY DAMAGE, SIR?
WE'LL HAVE A LOOK ROUND, MAXWELL, SHALL WE? OUGHT TO BE LIKE A BLOOMIN' SIEVE. 'FRAID THE C.O.'S HAD IT.

BAD LUCK ABOUT THE POOR OLD C.O. I DIDN'T SEE HIM. DID YOU, PETE?
NO, OLD MAN. BUT WE FAIR PLASTERED THOSE JERRIES. HAD THEM SPOT ON ALL THE WAY IN. GOOD OLD TREBLE SIX.

THE TWO FLIGHT COMMANDERS STAYED WITH THEIR FLIGHTS AT DEBRIEFING. IT WAS ALMOST AS THOUGH THEY WERE AVOIDING EACH OTHER. ONLY DINGLE HAD SEEN THE C.O. DIE
I HOPE THE RIGGERS CAN MEND MY KITE, DINGLE. NOTHING VITAL THOUGH. JUST FABRIC. COULD FLY HER AS SHE IS— JERRIES MIGHTN'T SEE ME COMING!
SORT OF CAMOUFLAGE! HA! HA! YOU OUGHT TO PATENT THAT, SAM. GET THE BOFFINS ON TO IT!

WHEN CHUCK AND DINGLE MET LATER, NEITHER MENTIONED THE FLIGHT OR ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE SQUADRON. THEIR CASUAL MANNER HID AN ALMOST UNBEARABLE TENSION.
COMIN' OUT TONIGHT, DINGLE?
I GUESS SO!
O.K. LET'S GO, EH?

Chapter 4. FULL CIRCLE



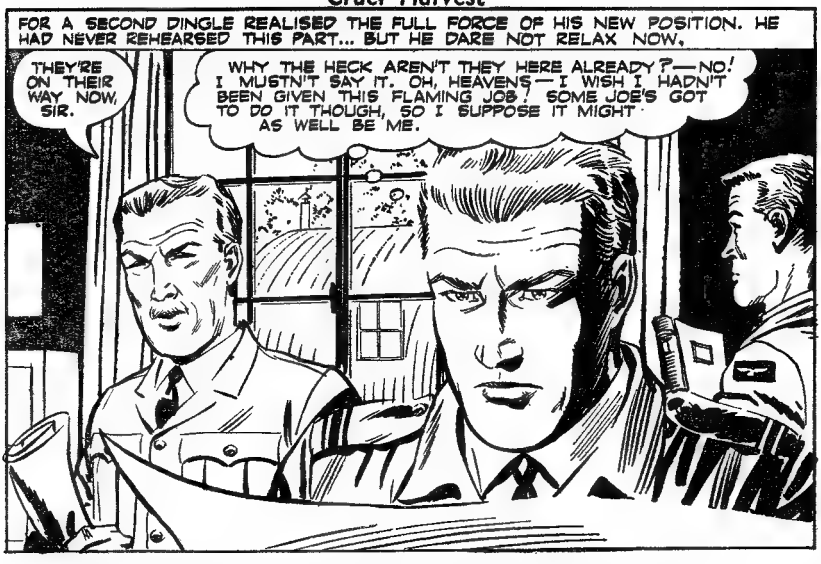
CHUCK WAS EAGER FOR NEWS. HE EXPECTED TO BE TOLD.
O.K., SHOOT! WHAT'S THE SCORE?
YOU HEARD WHAT I SAID TO THE SERGEANT, DIDN'T YOU? GET THE PILOTS TO REPORT TO FLIGHTS—NOW!
!ETHOA! THNN!

CHUCK WAS DUMBFOUNDED. HERE WAS HIS OLDEST FRIEND HOLDING OUT ON HIM.
WELL, I'LL BE A SON OF A GUN! NEVER THOUGHT HE'D GET TAKEN LIKE THAT. BY HECK, I'M DARNED GLAD I'M STILL JUST A PLAIN ORDINARY PEELO!

BUT HE DID NOT FORGET TO PASS THE ORDERS.
HEY, C'MON, YOU GUYS. C.O. WANTS US AT THE FLIGHTS RIGHT NOW.
WHAT FOR? ANY IDEA, CHUCK?
THERE WAS A CERTAIN "GRIT" BEHIND SAM'S RETORT.
PICKING BLACKBERRIES, OLD MAN. THEY'RE IN SEASON, YOU KNOW.
CHUCK FELT EDGY AND DID NOT APPRECIATE SAM'S IRONY. PERHAPS HE, TOO, WAS LOSING HIS SENSE OF HUMOUR...
LUCKY FOR YOU YOU MADE A MOVE, CROUCH! DON'T WANT ANY SPROG P.O.'S ON MY BACK, RIGHT?
RIGHT!

MEANWHILE, THE NEW C.O. HAD REACHED THE INTELLIGENCE ROOM.
YOU JUST LOCK THAT DOOR, SERGEANT. AND DON'T FORGET WHAT I SAID ON THE 'PHONE!

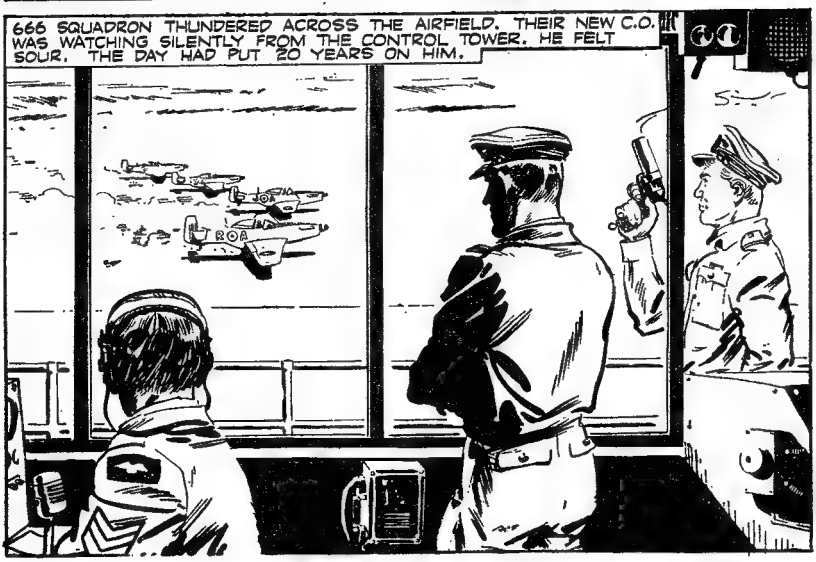
DINGLE DELL HAD SUDDENLY BECOME A STRANGER.
ANYTHING WRONG, DINGLE?
TWO THINGS, LOGAN. ONE — YOUR INTELLIGENCE SERGEANT BROADCASTS TOP SECRET INFORMATION ON A PUBLIC 'PHONE; TWO — I SUGGEST YOU REMEMBER THAT YOU'RE TALKING TO THE C.O. AND WHY AREN'T THE ADMIN. STAFF HERE?


FOR A SECOND DINGLE REALISED THE FULL FORCE OF HIS NEW POSITION. HE HAD NEVER REHEARSED THIS PART... BUT HE DARE NOT RELAX NOW.
THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY NOW, SIR.
WHY THE HECK AREN'T THEY HERE ALREADY?—NO! I MUSTN'T SAY IT. OH, HEAVENS—I WISH I HADN'T BEEN GIVEN THIS FLAMING JOB! SOME JOE'S GOT TO DO IT THOUGH, SO I SUPPOSE IT MIGHT AS WELL BE ME.

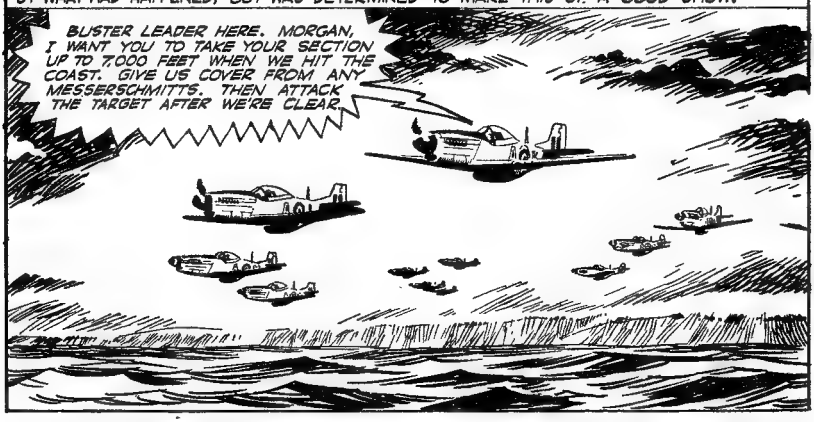
THE ORDERS THAT SQUADRON-LEADER DELL HAD READ WERE EXCITING BUT EXTREMELY DEMANDING. 666 SQUADRON WERE THE FIRST TO BE HURLED INTO THE BATTLE LINE.
GROUP WILL HAVE TO LAY ON TRANSPORT FOR THE MINIMUM STORES AND STAFF, SIR. IF THEY PLAY BALL WE CAN DO IT.
TWENTY FOUR HOURS IS SHORT NOTICE. NO TIME FOR DISMANTLING OR PROPER CRATING. WE'LL DO OUR BEST. BUT...

THE C.O'S RETORT WAS CRISP AND BRUTALLY UNCOMPROMISING.
IT'S DARNED WELL GOT TO BE DONE, THAT'S ALL!
THERE WAS ANOTHER PROBLEM. CHUCK WAS WAITING AT THE FLIGHTS WHEN THE NEW C.O. ARRIVED.
THE FIRST THING I'VE GOT TO SETTLE IS WHO IS TO COMMAND "B" FLIGHT. I'LL HAVE TO GIVE IT TO FLYING OFFICER MORGAN, HE'S SENIOR.
HOW ABOUT CROUCH?
DINGLE MADE NO REPLY...
F.O. MORGAN WAS SUMMONED. HE WAS A RATHER DULL LITTLE MAN. HE HAD BEEN A FLYING INSTRUCTOR AND HAD ONLY JUST ARRIVED THE DAY BEFORE.
YOU'LL TAKE "B" FLIGHT, MORGAN. YOU AND MACFARLANE WILL BE PRETTY BUSY NOW. DON'T STAND ANY NONSENSE FROM ANYONE.
I'M USED TO DEALING WITH SPROGS. DON'T WORRY, SIR. I'LL HAVE A WORD WITH THAT TALL, LANKY P.O. SEEMS A BIT COCKY TO ME.

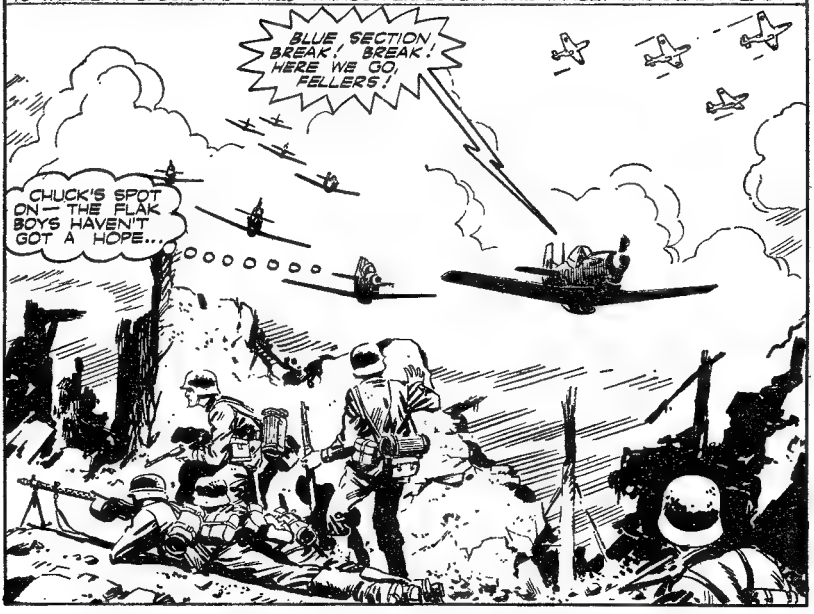
MORGAN BOUNCED OUT OF THE OFFICE. CHUCK WAS ALONE WITH DINGLE.
YOU FORGET I SHARE THE FLIGHTS WITH THAT LITTLE SQUIRT. MAN TO MAN, DINGLE, YOU MUST BE CRAZY. CAN'T YOU SEE HE'S NO IDEA? SAM CROUCH'LL EAT HIM UP!
I'VE THOUGHT OF THAT TOO. SAM'LL BE YOUR WINGER NOW. I'VE GOT TO STAY BEHIND TODAY TO KEEP THE PAPER WORK MOVING. YOU'LL BE LEADING THE ATTACK.


666 SQUADRON THUNDERED ACROSS THE AIRFIELD. THEIR NEW C.O. WAS WATCHING SILENTLY FROM THE CONTROL TOWER. HE FELT SOUR. THE DAY HAD PUT 20 YEARS ON HIM.

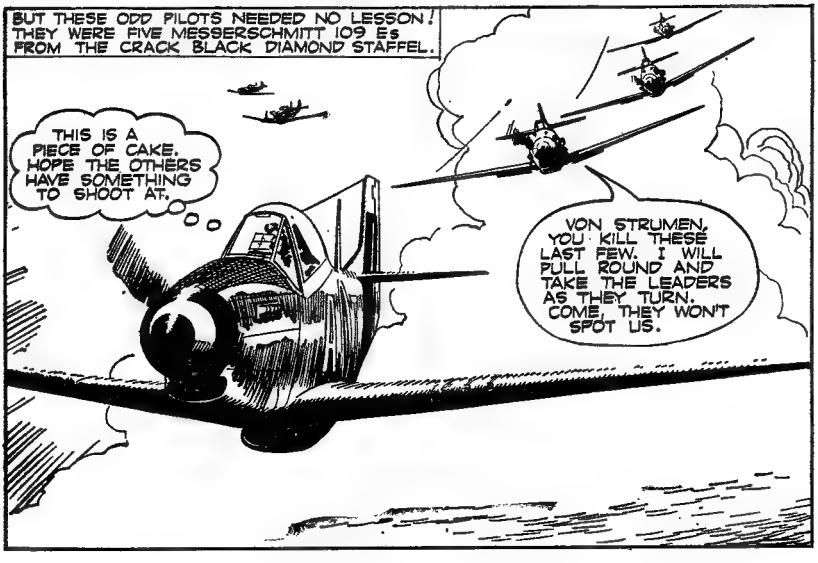
CHUCK REACHED OUT OVER THE SEA AT NEARLY FULL THROTTLE. HE WAS STUNNED BY WHAT HAD HAPPENED, BUT WAS DETERMINED TO MAKE THIS OP A GOOD SHOW.

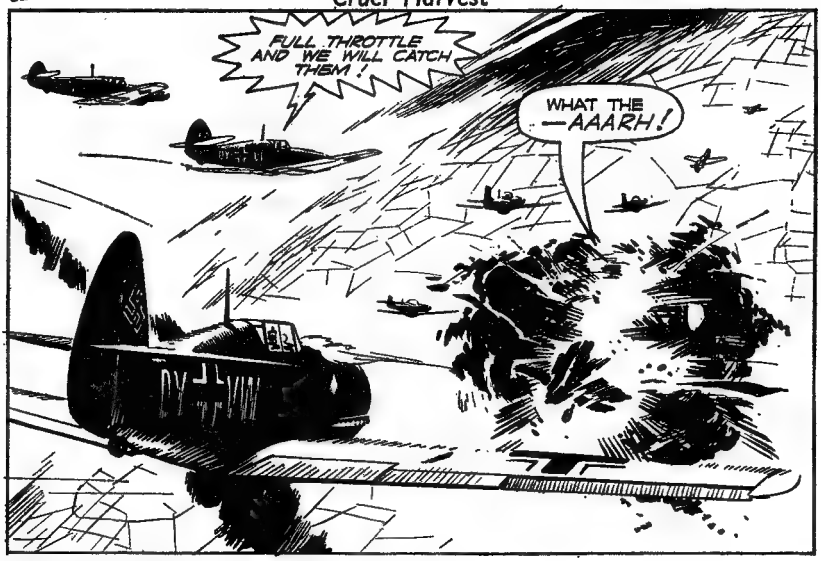


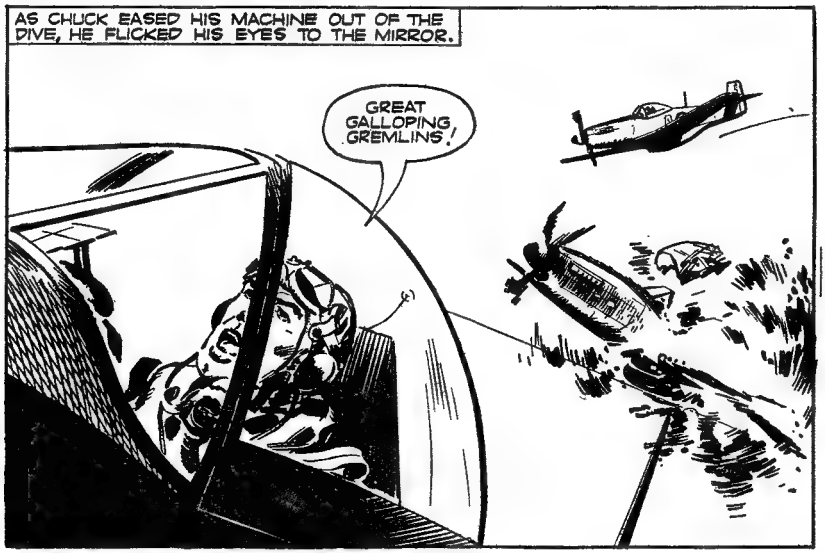
TREBLE SIX SCREAMED LOW OVER THE BEACHES. MORGAN PULLED UP AND TO THE LEFT. CHUCK HAD TIMED THINGS PERFECTLY. THE TARGET WAS DEAD AHEAD.



AS HE CLIMBED, MORGAN WAS FASCINATED BY THE BATTLE SCENE BELOW. THE BEACHES CRAMMED WITH STORES, AND THE HUNDREDS OF CRAFT. HE SAW CHUCK LEADING THE TWO SECTIONS IN. THREE 'PLANES SEEMED A LITTLE HIGHER THAN THE REST.
WHAT A SIGHT, THE SKY'S PRACTICALLY EMPTY. SOME OF THOSE PILOTS NEED A LESSON IN LOW FLYING!


BUT THESE ODD PILOTS NEEDED NO LESSON! THEY WERE FIVE MESSERSCHMITT 109 Es FROM THE CRACK BLACK DIAMOND STAFFEL.
THIS IS A PIECE OF CAKE. HOPE THE OTHERS HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOOT AT.
VON STRUMEN, YOU KILL THESE LAST FEW. I WILL PULL ROUND AND TAKE THE LEADERS AS THEY TURN. COME, THEY WON'T SPOT US.


FULL THROTTLE AND WE WILL CATCH THEM!
WHAT THE —AAARH!


AS CHUCK EASED HIS MACHINE OUT OF THE DIVE, HE FLICKED HIS EYES TO THE MIRROR.
GREAT GALLOPING GREMLINS!

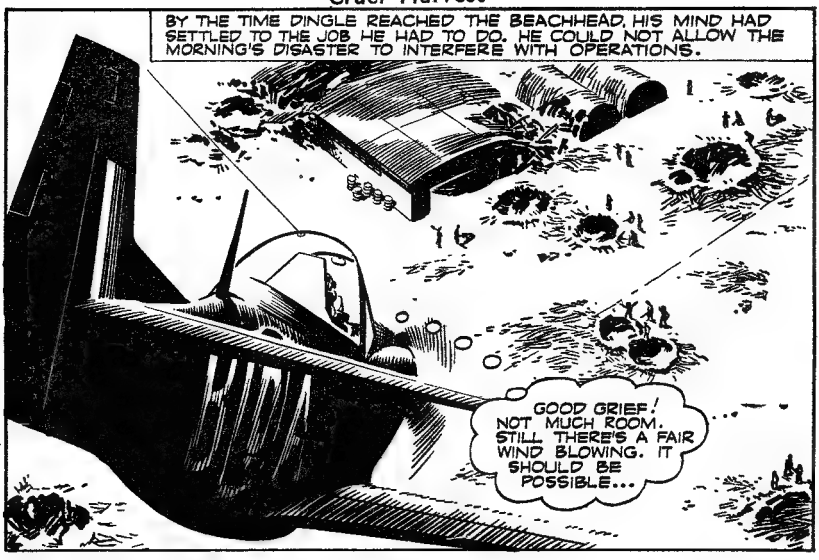
SAM'S VOICE WHIPPED ACROSS THE AIR.
LOOK OUT, CHUCK!!!
THOSE WERE SAM'S LAST WORDS. CHUCK JUST HAD TIME TO JETTISON THE HOOD AND JUMP CLEAR BEFORE HIS STRICKEN MUSTANG EXPLODED.

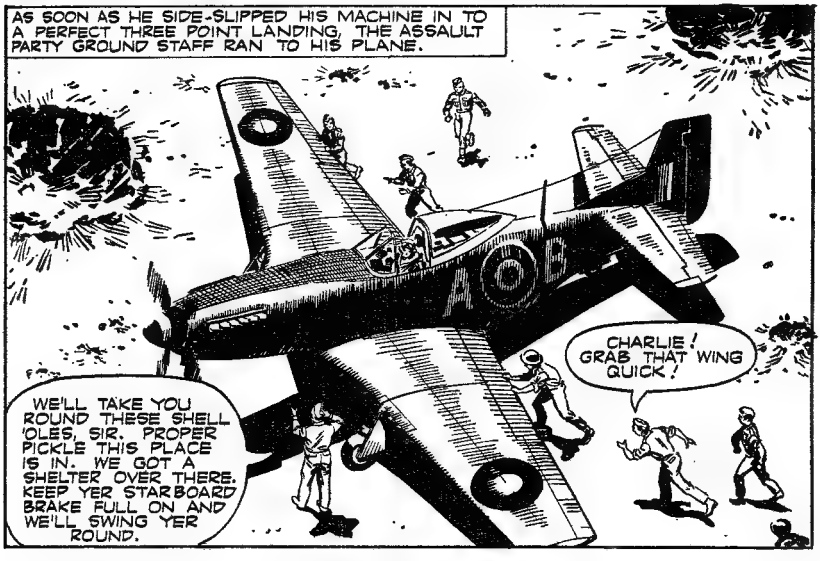
WHEN MORGAN SAW THE MUSTANGS PLUNGING DOWN IN FLAMES, HE CEASED TO ADMIRE THE WONDER OF THE SCENE. BUT HE THOUGHT THEY HAD BEEN HIT BY FLAK!
THAT'S MORE THAN 50 PER CENT CASUALTIES IN ONE TRIP! WE'D BETTER JOIN THE REMAINDER OUT AT SEA AND SEE THEM SAFELY HOME.
THEN AS HE TURNED FOR THE COAST, MORGAN SPOTTED THE MESSERSCHMITTS STREAKING INLAND.
AND I NEVER EVEN SAW THEM! IT'S ALL MY FAULT!
BACK AT STANBOURNE, SQUADRON LEADER DELL COUNTED HIS AIRCRAFT IN. A WHOLE SECTION GONE!
KEEP TRYING AIR SEA RESCUE AND HANG ON TO THAT LINE TO GROUP. I'M GOING TO SEE THE PILOTS. LET ME KNOW AT ONCE IF YOU GET ANY CLUES.
WE'LL DO OUR BEST, SIR.

IT WAS ONLY BY A SUPERHUMAN EFFORT THAT DINGLE CONTROLLED HIMSELF.
ARE YOU ABSOLUTELY SURE YOU SAW THEM ALL GO DOWN ?
SAM CROUCH HIT THE DECK RIGHT UNDER ME, SIR..FLIGHT LIEUTENANT MACFARLANE EXPLODED IN FRONT OF HIM.
DIDN'T YOU SEE ANY PARACHUTES, MORGAN? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE COVERING THEM, WEREN'T YOU?
I'M AFRAID NOT, SIR. THEY WERE TOO FAR AWAY.
2

DINGLE DARED NOT TRUST HIMSELF IN THE PRESENCE OF THE OTHER PILOTS. HE TOOK MORGAN ASIDE TO THE FLIGHT OFFICE.
I'M AFRAID THERE'S NOTHING I CAN SAY, SIR — EXCEPT THAT I HOPE I'VE LEARNT A LESSON FROM IT.
PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO EXPLAIN THAT TO THEIR FAMILIES, MORGAN. I'M FLYING OVER TO THE AIRSTRIP THIS AFTERNOON. YOU BRING THE REST OVER WHEN YOU GET MY ORDERS.

AREN'T YOU TAKING ANYONE WITH YOU, SIR?
I CAN LOOK AFTER MYSELF, THANKS, MORGAN!


BY THE TIME DINGLE REACHED THE BEACHHEAD, HIS MIND HAD SETTLED TO THE JOB HE HAD TO DO. HE COULD NOT ALLOW THE MORNING'S DISASTER TO INTERFERE WITH OPERATIONS.
GOOD GRIEF! NOT MUCH ROOM. STILL THERE'S A FAIR WIND BLOWING. IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE...


AS SOON AS HE SIDE-SLIPPED HIS MACHINE IN TO A PERFECT THREE POINT LANDING, THE ASSAULT PARTY GROUND STAFF RAN TO HIS PLANE.
CHARLIE! GRAB THAT WING QUICK!
WE'LL TAKE YOU ROUND THESE SHELL 'OLES, SIR. PROPER PICKLE THIS PLACE IS IN. WE GOT A SHELTER OVER THERE. KEEP YER STARBOARD BRAKE FULL ON AND WE'LL SWING YER ROUND.

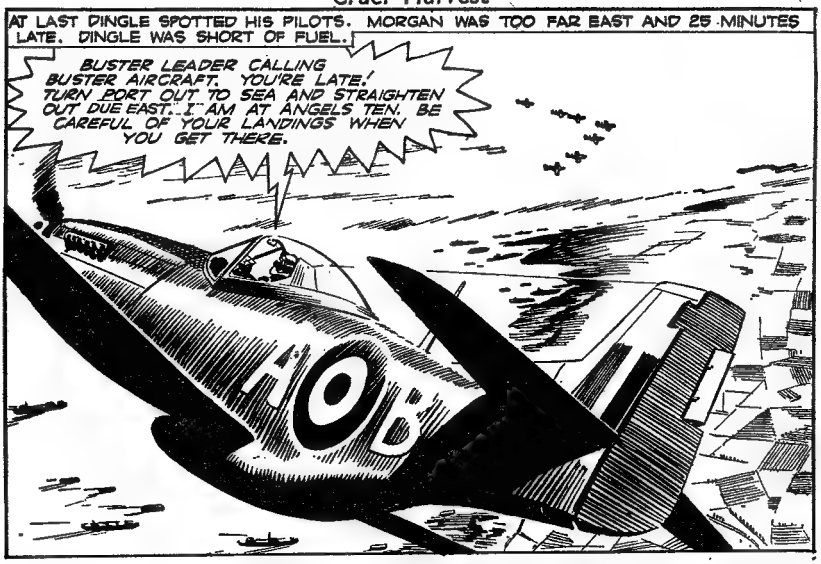
THEY MAN-HANDLED THE MUSTANG TO THE EDGE OF THE STRIP. DINGLE JUMPED FROM THE COCKPIT AND LEFT THE MECHANICS TO REFUEL AND SERVICE THE MACHINE. HE HAD TO CONTACT STANBOURNE.

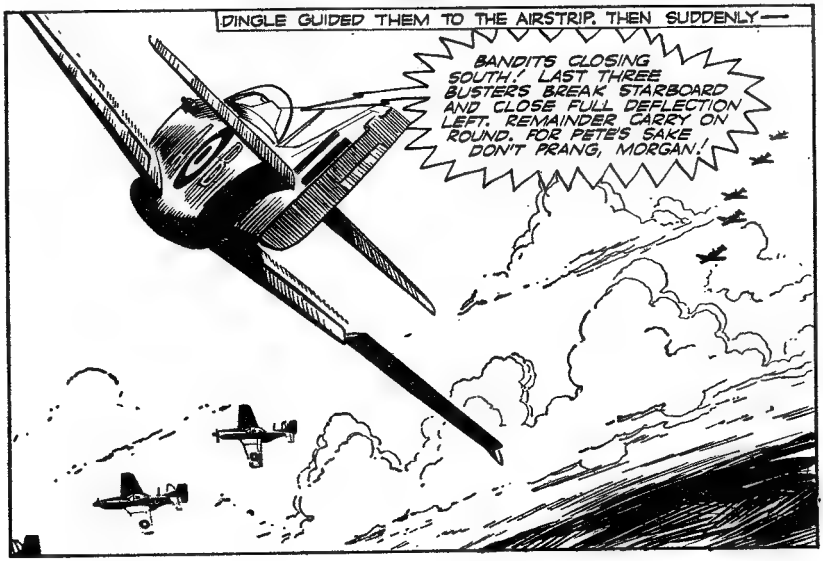
NICE WORK, SIR. WE SHOULD HAVE THE KITE READY IN 20 MINUTES. WE'VE BEEN TRAINING FOR THIS FOR MONTHS.

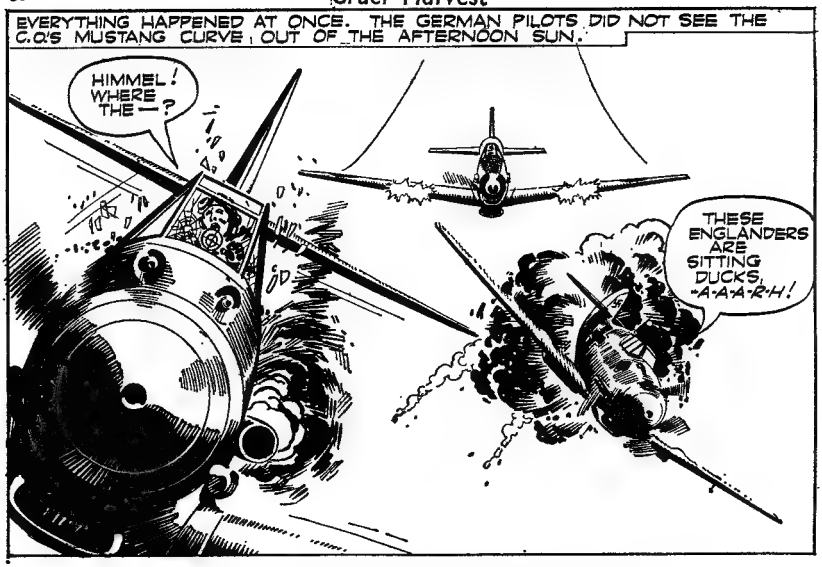
THANKS. GET ME A LINE TO GROUP WILL YOU? MY CHAPS CAN START OFF RIGHT NOW.

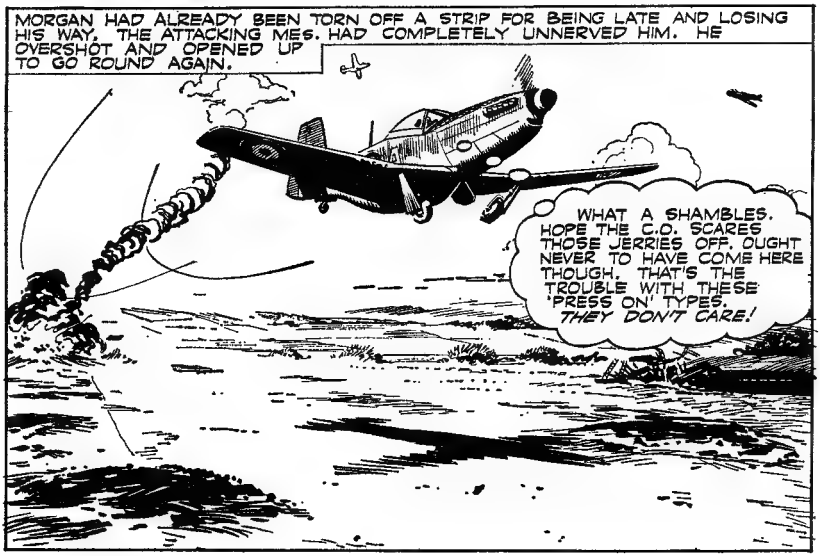
DINGLE WAS AMAZED HOW QUICKLY THEY CONTACTED STANBOURNE— AND HOW EFFICIENTLY THE LAD'S SERVICED HIS MUSTANG. AN HOUR LATER HE TOOK OFF.

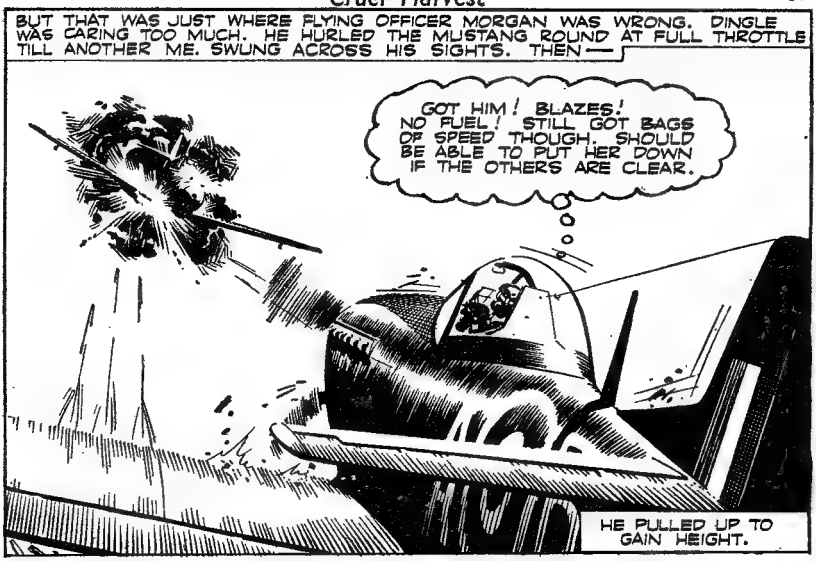
THEY'RE DUE HERE AT FIVE. I'LL HAVE A STOOGE ROUND AND THEN GIVE THEM TOP COVER WHILE THEY LAND. IT'LL BE A BIT DODGY IF ONE OF THEM PRANGS— NO ROOM FOR MISTAKES.


AT LAST DINGLE SPOTTED HIS PILOTS. MORGAN WAS TOO FAR EAST AND 25 MINUTES LATE. DINGLE WAS SHORT OF FUEL.
BUSTER LEADER CALLING BUSTER AIRCRAFT. YOU'RE LATE! TURN PORT OUT TO SEA AND STRAIGHTEN OUT DUE EAST. I AM AT ANGELS TEN. BE CAREFUL OF YOUR LANDINGS WHEN YOU GET THERE.


DINGLE GUIDED THEM TO THE AIRSTRIP, THEN SUDDENLY—
BANDITS CLOSING SOUTH! LAST THREE BUSTERS BREAK STARBOARD AND CLOSE FULL DEFLECTION LEFT. REMAINDER CARRY ON ROUND. FOR PETE'S SAKE DON'T PRANG, MORGAN!


EVERYTHING HAPPENED AT ONCE. THE GERMAN PILOTS DID NOT SEE THE C.O.'S MUSTANG CURVE OUT OF THE AFTERNOON SUN.
HIMMEL! WHERE THE —?
THESE ENGLANDERS ARE SITTING DUCKS, -A-A-A-R-H!


MORGAN HAD ALREADY BEEN TORN OFF A STRIP FOR BEING LATE AND LOSING HIS WAY. THE ATTACKING MEs. HAD COMPLETELY UNNERVED HIM. HE OVERSHOT AND OPENED UP TO GO ROUND AGAIN.
WHAT A SHAMBLES. HOPE THE C.O. SCARES THOSE JERRIES OFF. OUGHT NEVER TO HAVE COME HERE THOUGH. THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH THESE 'PRESS ON' TYPES. THEY DON'T CARE!

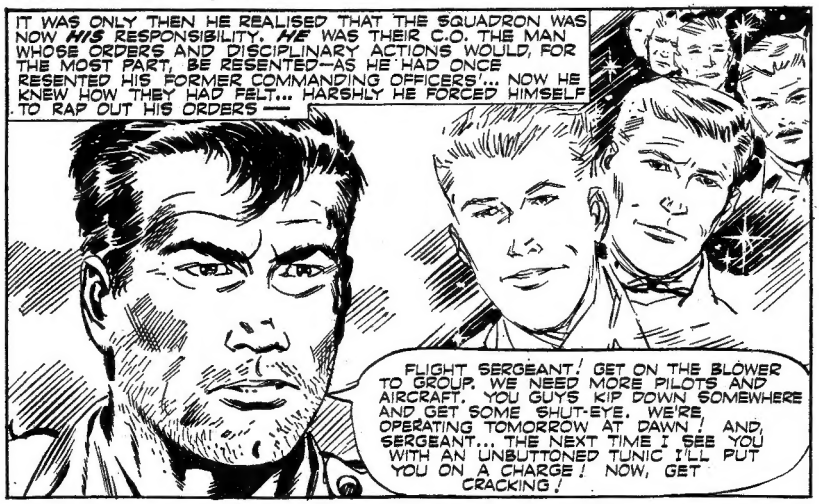

BUT THAT WAS JUST WHERE FLYING OFFICER MORGAN WAS WRONG. DINGLE WAS CARING TOO MUCH. HE HURLED THE MUSTANG ROUND AT FULL THROTTLE TILL ANOTHER ME. SWUNG ACROSS HIS SIGHTS. THEN—
GOT HIM! BLAZES! NO FUEL! STILL GOT BAGS OF SPEED THOUGH. SHOULD BE ABLE TO PUT HER DOWN IF THE OTHERS ARE CLEAR.
HE PULLED UP TO GAIN HEIGHT.

TWO MUSTANGS HAD ALREADY LANDED AND HAD BEEN MANHANDLED OFF THE STRIP BY THE WAITING GROUND STAFF, BUT AS MORGAN CAME ROUND AGAIN, HE FAILED TO NOTICE THERE WAS A MUSTANG IN TROUBLE.
THOSE TWO ARE GOING TO PRANG INTO EACH OTHER! BETTER GIVE THEM A RED.

BUT MORGAN COULD SEE NO OBSTRUCTION. THE PLANE'S NOSE HID THE GALLANT C.O. WHOM HE WAS OVERTAKING.
WHAT THE BLAZES ARE THEY PLAYING AT? THOSE TWO GOT DOWN ALL RIGHT AND I'M NOT GOING ROUND AGAIN!
BICH
BICH

AT THE EDGE OF THE STRIP THERE WAS SOMEONE WHO HAD JUST ARRIVED AFTER WALKING MANY MILES FROM THE POINT WHERE HE HAD LANDED BY PARACHUTE...A PALE, HUNGRY FLIGHT LIEUTENANT WHO KNEW BOTH PILOTS BY THE LETTERS ON THEIR MACHINES.
LOOK OUT, DINGLE!
P
B

CHUCK MACFARLANE, DEAD TIRED THOUGH HE WAS, WAS FIRST ON THE SCENE. HE TWISTED WRECKAGE APART IN A VAIN EFFORT TO RESCUE THE MANGLED REMAINS OF HIS OLD FRIEND.
I'M AFRAID HE'S DEAD, SIR!
I WANNA MAKE SURE, SERGEANT. YOU SEE TO THE OTHER ONE.



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